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THE CAUSES
OF THE
FRENCH REVOLUTION

BY
RICHARD HEATH DABNEY, M.A., PH.D.
PROFESSOR OF HISTORY IN THE STATE UNIVERSITY
OF INDIANA



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Press W. L. Mershon & Co.,
Rahway, N. J.,

TO

His Father,

THE SUREST GUIDE AND BEST INSTRUCTOR OF HIS YOUTH,

THE TRUEST FRIEND OF HIS MANHOOD,

THIS BOOK

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED BY

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

OF all the events in the annals of man since the dawn of the Christian Era, the French Revolution is, perhaps, the most extraordinary. It is not strange, therefore, that it should have fascinated the imagination of a multitude of historians. Nor can it be denied that Blanc, Mignet, Michelet, Carlyle, von Sybel, Taine, and others have vividly depicted its stirring scenes. But, however complete the picture they have given us of the Revolution itself, I venture to think that the causes of the Revolution have never been comprehensively treated by any single writer whatever. It would be difficult to give a more brilliant account of the pomp and pageantry of the old French Court ; of the enormous privileges of the nobility and clergy ; of the frightful misery of the peasantry ; of the crushing weight of taxation ; of the bands of ferocious poachers, smugglers and highwaymen that swarmed through France in the eighteenth century ; and of many other matters of importance, than is given in Taine's *L'Ancien Régime*. Louis Blanc has discussed with ability some of the more remote causes of the Revolution, and has shown clearly the revolutionary tendency of the works of Quesnay, Gournay, the elder Mirabeau, and others of the *Économistes*. His treatment,

too, of the conflict between Jesuits and Jansenists, and of the radical writings of Voltaire, Rousseau, Helvétius, d'Holbach, and others is exceedingly vigorous. The ablest discussion, however, of this literary movement against Church and State is given by Buckle. That brilliant thinker has described with a master-hand the vast influence of England upon France, and has traced the course of the turbulent intellectual stream from its rise at the death of Louis XIV. to its inundation of France in 1789. He has pointed out the baleful effects of the "protective spirit," and the fatal consequences to the French government of its insane persecution of literary men. He has shown with much clearness and learning the close connection between the progress of physical science and the radical spirit of the age, and has called attention to many other interesting symptoms of the approaching Revolution. The condition of the *bourgeoisie*, the great preponderance of Paris, and the extreme legislative, administrative and judicial centralization are among the subjects so powerfully handled by de Tocqueville.

Other topics have been well presented by still other writers. But there is no writer—so far as I am aware—who has not omitted, in his enumeration of the causes of the Revolution, to discuss some point, or points, of the gravest importance. To supply, in a measure, this deficiency, is the object of this work. That the author has succeeded in giving a completely adequate discussion of so great and complex an historical question, it would be arrogant to claim. But he nevertheless ventures to hope

that, in a short space, he has given a more comprehensive account of the causes of the great upheaval than has thus far appeared.

In preparing the work, the author has not only made use of the facts recorded by the above-mentioned writers and others, but has also used their thoughts, and even their language, when it seemed best to do so. In passages where the language of any writer has been paraphrased for the sake of condensation or for other reasons, no quotation marks have, of course, been employed. For such cases this general acknowledgment, it is hoped, will suffice, and will relieve the author of the necessity of loading his margin with references.

The work is based on a series of nine lectures which were delivered in the spring of 1886, by special request, before the faculty and students of Washington and Lee University and the public of Lexington, Virginia.

R. H. DABNEY.

BLOOMINGTON, IND.,
February 15, 1888.

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THE CAUSES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

WHEN the Roman Empire, weak from internal decay, had yielded at length to the savage force of the Hunnish hordes and the sturdy strokes of the rude Germanic tribes of the North, Europe sank down into the torpid slumber of the Dark Ages. In the West, it seemed that the civilization of Greece and Rome had been entirely swept away; and in the Byzantine Empire the descendants of Aristotle and Plato wasted their intellectual acuteness in ferocious theological wranglings upon insoluble questions. Homœousians and Homœiousians made the air resound with their vain disputes, and Athanasians murdered Arians, while Arians butchered Athanasians. For hundreds of years Constantinople was the battleground of opposing sects; and even in the fifteenth century, when the sword of the Ottoman Turk was flaming before the gates of the city, the Greeks could get no help from the Pope of

Rome because they were unable to agree whether the Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father *and* the Son or only from the Father. In Western Europe, for a time, things were even worse. For about five or six hundred years, thought all but ceased entirely. The age of the Merovingians was an age of gross superstition, savage anarchy, and bloodshed. Nor was the genius of Charlemagne sufficient to create civilization out of barbarism ; and after his death anarchy reigned once more supreme in Italy, Germany, and France.

And yet, amidst all this lawlessness and confusion, the old civilization was not wholly dead. The priests, the only class who possessed even the semblance of an education, could at least read and write a species of mongrel Latin, and thus preserved, in spite of their not infrequent participation in rapine and murder, at least the instrument of future intellectual and social progress. Gradually there was formed from mingled Roman and Germanic elements the institution of Feudalism, which culminated in the age of chivalry and the Crusades—that strange product of the religious and the warlike spirits, where pious enthusiasm, chivalrous devotion, and heroic valor were indissolubly blended with highway robbery, ferocious cruelty, and brutal lust. The Crusades were the symptom and the result of the power of the noble and the power of the priest ; but they also mark the period when that power began to wane.

The contact of the Christians with the then far more civilized Mohammedans had stimulated Europe

to thought. Heresies arose, and, though deluged with blood, could never be extinguished. Men had at least *begun* to think for themselves, men like Abelard and Arnold of Brescia, like Roger Bacon and Albertus Magnus; and, thought being once aroused, the Church was unable to crush it. It could be extirpated neither by the wholesale massacre of the Albigenses, nor by the abolition, on a charge of heresy, of the order of the Knights Templar, and the burning of fifty-four of its members, nor by the persecution of the Wycliffites and the Lollards and the Hussites. All these heresies were premonitory symptoms of the approach of that vast rebellion against authority which, aided by the printing-press, culminated in the Reformation and the French Revolution.

And as with the priest, so with the noble. At the close of the Crusades the nobility was decimated by battle and pestilence. The estates of many of the nobles were burdened with debt, and came into the hands of the thrifty burgesses of the rising cities. Everywhere in Europe the "industrial spirit" was gradually overcoming the martial indolence of the nobility; and the towns, in alliance with the kings, were breaking the power of the aristocracy. This movement was accelerated by the invention of gunpowder, which put the mail-clad knight on a level with the peasant musketeer, and the turreted castle at the mercy of the cannon. The middle and lower classes, in their struggle against the tyranny of the nobles, formed an alliance with the Crown; but when the kings of Europe, after weakening the political

power of the nobles, attempted themselves to tyrannize over the people, they provoked an opposition, feeble at first, but which, like the great rebellion against authority in religion, grew stronger and stronger, and also culminated in the French Revolution.

In France the Crown had begun its victories over the great nobles as early as the reign of Louis VI., before the middle of the twelfth century; and from that time on the movement was slow but steady toward unity and order under the king, as opposed to disjointed anarchy under the nobles. When Philip Augustus defeated John of England and Otho IV. of Germany at the battle of Bouvines in 1214, the French people felt distinctly, for the first time, a thrill of national and union sentiment. There were many reactions, of course, many temporary triumphs of the sectional spirit of the nobles; but these were but the eddies in the stream, and were unable to effectually impede the central current, which, under kings like Louis VIII., Louis IX., Philip the Fair, and, later on, Louis XI. and Francis I., flowed inevitably toward the goal of an organized and coherent nation.

The decisive strokes, however, were dealt by Richelieu, who crushed the centrifugal tendencies of the Huguenot nobles; and by Mazarin, who triumphed over the uprising known as the Fronde, and thus ushered in the concentrated absolute monarchy of Louis XIV. Under this sovereign, whose saying, *L'état, c'est moi*, is the very epitome of the theory of unlimited monarchy, France was the greatest military power in the world and the arbiter of Europe.

The king of England and some of the petty German princes were the hirelings of Louis, and the domains of France were enlarged.

For a long time, the people, dazzled by military glory and the splendor of the Court of Versailles, which was the ideal of nearly every prince in Europe, bore not only without a murmur, but even gladly, the lack of all political freedom and the tyranny of the royal officials. But when the overweening arrogance of Louis had plunged the country into disastrous wars against the combined forces of nearly all Europe; when his religious fanaticism had driven from France more than half a million* of her most opulent and industrious citizens, the Huguenots; when, in spite of grinding taxation, the treasury was almost empty, and the population decreasing, the love of the people turned to hate; and when at last the old King's eyes had closed in death, the country went almost mad with joy.† Bowed down by misfortunes of many kinds, and a slave to the influence of the superstitious Madame de Maintenon, Louis XIV. had become exceedingly pious in the latter part of his reign, and had infused a spirit of religious hypocrisy through the whole court. But when he died there followed a sudden and violent reaction, and many indemnified themselves for the tyranny under which they had suffered by plunging into the grossest excesses. But,

* Weber's "*Lehrbuch der Weltgeschichte*," Leipzig, 1873, Vol. II., p. 259. Buckle's "*History of Civilization*," New York, 1870, Vol. I., p. 493.

† Buckle, p. 517.

among the young men of that day, there were some whose ideas of liberty rose higher than license; and, determined to restore to France that freedom of speech which she had lost, they turned their eyes to the only country where that freedom was then allowed. This determination "gave rise," says Buckle, "to that junction of the French and English intellects which, looking at the immense chain of its effects, is by far the most important fact in the history of the eighteenth century."

But before examining this and the other causes of that stupendous upheaval which is called the French Revolution, I shall endeavor to paint a picture of France as it was before the Revolution, a picture of the Old Régime—a picture of the Court, of the nobility, of the clergy, of the *bourgeoisie* or middle class, of the peasantry and the populace of the cities, of the social life in general, and of the character and methods of the government. Having done this, I shall proceed to inquire why it was that so rotten an edifice was inevitably doomed to fall; and the reader will then see that the French Revolution was not the product of chance, not an accident, but the inevitable result of complex and resistless forces which, for nearly a hundred years, had been slowly but surely undermining the very foundations of the old French society; that it was, in fact, but the explosion of a powder magazine, to which the train had been long since laid, but the *dénouement* of a terrible tragedy long prepared. Of course, if Louis XV. and Louis XVI. had been men of different characters, and if their ministers and ad-

visers had been other than they were, the details of the Revolution might have been slightly different. If Napoleon had possessed a less phenomenal genius for war, the doctrines of the Revolution would not have been disseminated so rapidly and so radically through Europe as they were. But the great general results of the Revolution, the destruction of the antiquated and oppressive rights of the privileged classes, in short, the destruction of almost everything that pertains to mediæval Feudalism, were produced, and produced inevitably, by great general causes, wholly beyond the control of any individual. It was the misfortune of France that the rubbish of the Middle Ages had to be swept away by the dynamite of Revolution ; while in England, under more favorable conditions, it was, and still is being, removed by the process of gradual reform. For in England, owing to the insular position of the country, which protected it from foreign foes, there was never the same necessity for a strong central military power as on the continent, where each nation is constantly menaced by its neighbors. The Crown was, therefore, never able in England to triumph so completely over the nobles, and afterwards over the people, as in France. In England there were legal methods of popular opposition to the encroachments of the King ; but in France there was no great legislative assembly like the English Parliament, no great popular political meetings, no freedom of the press, no *habeas corpus*, no Bill of Rights ; and the so-called parliaments (which were courts of justice with closely circumscribed semi-

legislative functions, such as the right to register or remonstrate against the King's edicts) concerned themselves much more with the narrow interests of their class than with the rights of the people. Thus it was that, the laws being all on the side of the privileged classes, and these classes being determined to retain their privileges, there was only one road to popular freedom—the road of the Revolution.

I shall begin, then, by examining the structure of the old French society—its several classes, and the relative status of these classes. And, first, a look at the privileged classes.

CHAPTER II.

MEDIÆVAL PRIESTS, NOBLES, AND KINGS.

IT has already been stated that, in the Dark Ages, the clergy was the only class that possessed even the rudiments of an education. And, although it cannot be denied that, in so rude a time, the priests were often as savage as the laymen, that they were sometimes actually the chieftains of robber-bands, it is nevertheless true that they were the only class which, in an age of lawlessness, advocated peace and opposed brute force. In an age when men preferred a life of alternate indolence and robbery as a means of livelihood to honest work, the monks championed in words and by their example those habits of steady industry which are the basis of civilization. They alone it was who kept alive, amidst universal ignorance, the few sparks of the ancient literature, science, and art which had survived the inundation of the Roman Empire by the barbarians. Looked upon by these rude men with the same awe with which their own former priests and sorcerers had inspired them, the Christian clergy were enabled, by threats of misfortune in this world and of eternal damnation in the next, to diminish, at least to some extent, the number of lawless and violent crimes. By the pomp and pageantry of a

gorgeous and impressive ceremonial they infused into the minds of their ignorant followers a higher ideal than that of a simple cut-throat. In the midst of anarchy the Church alone possessed a powerful organization, habits of subordination, and a system of laws. Bishops and abbots were the ablest advisers and ministers of the kings. By intelligent and regular labor the monk produced more, and by sobriety and economy consumed less, than the layman. Thus it was that where the latter failed the former prospered. He succored the needy and the fugitive; and often the monastery was the nucleus of a future town.

All this, and more, the clergy of the early Middle Ages performed for the people; and they were richly rewarded by the enormous influence and power which they wielded for many centuries, and by the wealth which the pious heaped upon the Church. But when Europe had begun to awake from her mediæval slumber; when the clergy, instead of being the sole fosterers of the remnants of literature and science, had begun to oppose intellectual progress; when the monasteries were no longer the centres of industry, but the seed-plots of idleness and vice; when the great revolution of the sixteenth century had divided the Church into opposing sects; and when the enthusiasm of that time had subsided,—it was seen that the Church still possessed, indeed, enormous wealth and numberless privileges, but that she no longer performed the services, in return for which, in a superstitious age, she had been permitted to wield so vast a power.

What her wealth and privileges were we shall presently see. But, first, a glance at the career of the nobility.

When, after the death of Charlemagne, society was dissolved into its elements, and anarchy prevailed, who was it that was the natural aristocrat? Evidently, the man who could fight most bravely and effectually in defence of himself and of others. Evidently, too, the man with sufficient means to possess a horse, a costly suit of armor and a good sword, or, still more, a fortified castle, was far more likely to succeed as a warrior than a pauper peasant. Hence there arose, partly by force, but largely by tacit consent, a division of labor between the noble and the peasant—the latter tilling the soil as a serf, and the former protecting him against robbery and violence. Like the negro slaves of the *ante bellum* Southern States, the mediæval serfs were compelled to work for the nobles, and, in so barbarous an age, were of course more often maltreated; but they received, in return, protection against their enemies, and attention in sickness and misfortune. The interests of lord and serf were linked together; and the peasant was proud of the splendor and military prowess of his leader. The landed estate of a feudal baron was a country in miniature for the serf, like the Southern plantation for the negro slave.

In so anarchical an age, however, the lesser nobles were often unable to protect themselves and their dependants from the depredations of hostile neighbors; and, therefore, many of them swore fealty to the great counts and dukes in return for protection,

Thus more and more of the lesser nobles were united and organized under a few of the great territorial lords; and at length the evolution was complete, when the greatest lord of all, the King, had united the whole country into a coherent organism.

CHAPTER III.

PECUNIARY PRIVILEGES OF NOBILITY AND CLERGY.

PRIESTS, nobles, and kings, therefore, performed great services in their time; and they also received an ample recompense. But power begets arrogance, and inherited wealth begets luxury and sloth. And when we look at France in the eighteenth century we see that the privileged classes, so far from performing the services due from them, led lives of licentious ease, while the toiling millions groaned under their grasping tyranny. So far from being looked up to and admired as honored leaders, they were hated and feared by the people, whom they despised and neglected.

Taine has estimated that in France, before the Revolution, the nobility numbered about 140,000, and the clergy about 130,000; that is, about 25,000 or 30,000 noble families, and about 23,000 monks in 2,500 monasteries, 37,000 nuns in 1,500 convents, and 60,000 curates and vicars in as many churches and chapels. If we divide the soil of France into five equal parts, we find that one of these fifths was owned by the king and the towns, another by the middle class, another by the peasantry, another by the nobility, and another by the clergy. Thus, the two latter classes, who numbered but

270,000 in a population of 27,000,000, owned two-fifths of the soil of France.

It must be remembered, too, that upon the land of the privileged classes were nearly all the largest and handsomest buildings, the palaces, castles, convents, and cathedrals, and nearly all the most costly furniture, silver plate, works of art, etc. The property of the clergy was worth nearly four billion francs, with an income of 80,000,000 or 100,000,000 a year. To this we must add the tithes, 123,000,000 a year, which make a total annual income of about 200,000,000; a sum which, owing to the subsequent change in the relative value of the precious metals, must be doubled if we wish to estimate the modern equivalent. The Benedictine monks of Cluny alone, less than 300 in number, had an income of 1,800,000 francs; the Cardinal de Rohan, archbishop of Strasburg, of more than a million. Doubling these figures to obtain the modern equivalents, we see what colossal fortunes were in the hands of the great magnates of the Church.

The case of the nobles was similar. It has been calculated that the appanages of the princes of the royal family, the counts of Artois and Provence, and the dukes of Orléans and Penthièvre covered a seventh of the territory of France. The princes of the blood possessed together a yearly income of nearly 25,000,000, the duke of Orléans alone an income of 11,500,000. And even this vast sum must be doubled for comparison with modern times.

Such were some of the remnants of the period when dukes and counts were practically the sov-

ereigns of their territories. Dethroned by the kings, they had lost their sovereignty and ceased to perform the duties of sovereigns, but retained their wealth. And they retained not merely the wealth, but many of the privileges and immunities of sovereigns ; for example, their total or partial exemption from taxation. The *taille*, the largest direct tax, which amounted, according to Necker, to 91,000,000 a year, fell almost entirely upon the *roturiers* or plebeians. Nor were the nobles of the eighteenth century subject, except to a very small extent, to the *vingtièmes* and *capitation*, two other direct taxes, bearing respectively revenues of 76,500,000 and of 41,500,000 francs.

These two taxes were originally intended to fall uniformly upon all citizens; but the clergy were soon enabled, through masterly diplomacy, to cast off the burden. Being an organized body, they could treat with the King, and gained the right to tax themselves and to pay their share in the form of a so-called "free gift" (*don gratuit*) ; then to diminish the amount of this gift, or sometimes not pay it at all. In 1788 they paid only 1,800,000 francs, and in 1789 they paid nothing at all. Still more : they sometimes actually succeeded in persuading the King to pay *them* something out of the public treasury. The nobles, not being an organized body, made private arrangements with the ministers, intendants, and other officials, who felt great deference for their rank. Their blue blood exempted them, their servants, and their servants' servants from military service, from the entertain-

ment of soldiers, and from the obligation to repair the public roads. The capitation tax being imposed in a certain proportion to the amount of *taille* due from the tax-payer, the nobles, accordingly, paid scarcely any capitation. "In the provinces," says Turgot, "the capitation of the privileged has been gradually reduced to an excessively moderate amount, whereas the capitation of those subject to the *taille* is almost equal to the entire *taille*." For example, in the province of Champagne, where the capitation brought in nearly 1,500,000 francs, the nobility paid only 14,000. According to Calonne, if the concessions and privileges had been suppressed, the *vingtièmes* would have brought in double what they did. The wealthier and more influential the noble, the greater his immunity. "I make arrangements," said the duke of Orléans, "with the officials, and pay only about what I wish to." The princes of the blood paid, as their share of the two *vingtième* taxes, only 188,000 francs, instead of paying, as they should have done, 2,400,000. At bottom, the exemption of the nobility from taxation was a remnant of their lost sovereignty; and the noble resisted the tax-gatherer, not solely from pecuniary interest, but because to be taxed was regarded as the mark of a plebeian. "Your sensitive heart," wrote a nobleman to an intendant, "will never consent to a father of my station being taxed to the full extent of the *vingtièmes* like a vulgar father."

Everywhere we see remnants, in the form of ceremonies, rights and privileges, of this old sover-

eignty. The bishop, the abbot, the abbess, the chapter, as well as the lay lord, possessed a species of domain; for the monastery and the church were formerly miniature states like the county and the duchy. Thirty-two bishops, without counting the chapters, were thus the temporal as well as the spiritual lords, in whole or in part, of their episcopal cities, sometimes of the environs, and sometimes, as with the bishop of Saint-Claude, of the entire territory. Some noblemen were, to a certain extent, almost like viceroys. For example, the house of Orléans collected for itself the *aides*, which were taxes on wines and liquors, on articles of gold and silver, on the manufacture of iron, on steel, cards, paper, starch, etc. Even the lesser lord possessed many rights which had survived the period of his local sovereignty. He had his special pew in church and the right of sepulture in the choir, and often the right of choosing the curate. Often, too, he was a justice, with the right to name the bailiff, the clerk of the court, the notaries, and other officials. He had his private prison, and sometimes actually his private scaffold. He appropriated the property of a man condemned to death, and also all lands which had lain uncultivated for ten years. If a piece of land was sold, the nobleman of the district took for himself a sixth, and sometimes a fifth or even a fourth of the price, which was also the case when land was rented for more than nine years. In 1724 the king suppressed 1,200 tolls which were levied by the nobles; but, though others were being continually suppressed, a great number

remained. For example, the lord, or *seigneur*, levied tolls on the bridges, on the roads, on the ferries, on the boats ascending or descending, etc. Horses, cattle, sheep, and hogs which passed his château paid him toll. He taxed provisions and merchandise brought to his fair or his market. He forced the people to have their bread baked in his oven, their grapes pressed in his wine-press, their corn ground at his mill, their cattle butchered at his slaughter-house. For all this they had to pay exorbitant prices; for he forcibly suppressed all competition and maintained the monopolies for himself. One million five hundred thousand peasants, who still wore the chain of serfdom upon their necks, were obliged to work ten or twelve days a year for their *seigneurs*, and to pay them an annual tax. In the barony of Choiseul, in the province of Champagne, the inhabitants were forced to plow and sow the lands of their master and to harvest and house his crops; each parcel of land, each house, each herd of cattle paid him dues; children inherited the property of their parents only on condition of living with them during their life-time; and if absent at their death, the *seigneur* inherited the property. In the provinces of Bourbonnais,* Nivernais, Auvergne, Bourgogne, and others, the *seigneur* made the people pay for pasturing their cattle on the common. Everywhere in Old France we see the *seigneur* exercising similar rights, although their justification was gone. He owned

* De Tocqueville, "L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution," *Note* at end of volume.

the non-navigable streams in his domain, and he alone could grant the right to fish in them. To hunt was a mark of nobility, and therefore the *seigneur* alone had the right to do so. The exclusive right to sell wine during the thirty or forty days after the harvest enabled him to obtain higher prices than the *roturier*. Blue blood possessed also the monopoly of owning pigeons; and as thousands of these birds preyed upon the crops of the *roturier*, who was prohibited, under severe penalties, from killing them, there were few of the feudal rights more hated than this—as was seen at the opening of the Revolution, when the pigeon-houses all over France were torn down by the infuriate peasants.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CLASSES AND THE MASSES.

THESE and many more were the feudal rights enjoyed by the *seigneur* and execrated by the *roturier*. In the tenth century, the count, the bishop, and the abbot had performed services corresponding to their privileges. But not so now. Having ceased to be the sovereign and the military leader of his peasants, the *seigneur* should, at least, have performed the functions of their local magistrate and of their representative with the central government. Outside of France we find the feudal rights of the nobility and clergy still more numerous and severe ; but we also find greater services performed. As late as 1809 the bishop of Münster in Westphalia ruled like a king ; but although he flogged his subjects as a father would flog his boys, he at any rate protected and cared for them as a father. He gave them an asylum in sickness and old age, and provided for their widows when they died. The code of Frederick the Great shows us that serfdom in Prussia was still more severe, but that it was also coupled with obligations on the part of the lords. In England, the clergy still received the tithe from land-owners, and that, too, the strict tenth, instead of, as in France, an

amount ranging from the eleventh to the thirty-second part of the crop. The English nobility owned a still larger proportion of the land than the French, and exercised a still greater authority. But the tenants and laborers of the English squire were no longer his serfs nor even his vassals; they were free. His government was by influence and not by command. As proprietor and patron, as cultivator and improver of the land, the English squire gained the respect of the country people of his neighborhood; and as lord-lieutenant, officer of the militia, administrator, and justice of the peace, he visibly performed useful social functions. And, what is very important, he was not an absentee like the French *seigneur*, who danced attendance upon the King at Versailles, but resided upon his estate, and was thus well known from boyhood to the local public, and was in sympathy with his neighbors in his business and his pleasures, in his fox-hunts and in his services as a vestryman. Formerly, the French nobility had also resided upon their estates; and even at the period that we are considering this was the case in a few of the provinces. And where it *was* the case we find much less discontent than elsewhere. While the *seigneur* treated the *bourgeois* with disdain, he showed great courtesy and affability to the peasant. When famine and distress came upon the peasants, they were not infrequently succored by the resident nobility and clergy. But these belonged for the most part to the poorer and lower ranks of the two great classes. The great nobles, like the great and influential dignitaries of

the Church, the commendatory abbots, the grand vicars, the canons, the bishops, and the archbishops, resided mostly in the large cities, and especially in Paris and Versailles. Only the poor and broken-down nobles, and the priors and curates (*curés*) dwelt in the country. These men, living, as they did, in daily contact with the peasants, felt sympathy with them—especially after general attention had been directed to the latter by the writings of Rousseau and the political economists, and the philanthropic spirit had spread from Paris to the châteaux and abbeys of the provinces.

But in spite of the kindly disposition of the resident nobles, and in spite of the kindly offices which some of them performed towards the poor, they continued to be, as a class, both hurtful and hated. For, while retaining their feudal rights, they no longer performed their feudal duties. In these the central government, as we shall see hereafter, had supplanted them. Without special permission of the King, no twenty *seigneurs* could meet together and deliberate. If those of Franche-Comté were allowed to dine together once a year and hear mass, it was only by tolerance, and only in the presence of the royal intendant. Except in his very limited judicial duties, the *seigneur* took no part in public affairs. Nothing remained to him but his titles and his desire for titles and rank-distinctions. The instructions to many delegates of the nobility to the States-General of 1789 contained demands for a distinctive mark of honor for the nobles—as, for example, a cross or a ribbon. Acts of administration,

such as the laying of royal taxes, the levying of the militia, the regulation of the statute labor upon the public roads, were regarded by the *seigneur* as beneath him, and fit only for a *roturier*. Disdainful and exclusive, he sulked in his château, and, so far from defending his peasants, was content to defend himself, to maintain his privileges, to have his taxes reduced, to obtain for his domestics exemption from military service, to preserve his person, his dwelling, his servants, and his hunting and fishing grounds from the universal usurpation which was delivering all property and all rights into the hands of "Monseigneur" the intendant and "Messieurs" the *subdélégués*.

But, in spite of all their privileges, the nobility were becoming impoverished; and the poorer, the prouder. In the memoirs of the time we meet with pen-pictures of hunting noblemen in hob-nailed shoes, with old rusty swords at their sides—half-starved, but refusing to work. The right of primogeniture, instituted that sovereignty and patronage might not be divided, ruined the nobles when sovereignty and patronage were no longer theirs. "In Brittany," says Chateaubriand, "the eldest son inherited two-thirds of the property, and the younger sons divided among them the remaining third." Thus, he continues, "the younger sons of the younger sons soon reached the partition of a pigeon, a rabbit, and a hunting-dog." Disdaining mercantile business, manufactures, and employment as government officials, they sank ever deeper into poverty. "High and puissant lords of a pigeon-house, a toad-hole, and

a rabbit warren," the more they lacked of the substance of nobility the more they were attached to the name. Half-starved upon their estates, they spent the winter in the city, and squandered their little all. Debts and mortgages accumulated; and, piece by piece, the *seigneur* was compelled to sell his land, until, at last, nothing remained but his dwelling and his feudal rights. Having no other income than that from these rights, he of course rigorously enforced the payments, however oppressive for the peasant they might be.

Such, then, is the last scene of the great feudal drama. Such is the situation of the nobility after their political overthrow by the monarchy. In this last scene we behold the nobleman and the peasant, no longer bound together by the ties of mutual interests and mutual aid, but face to face as creditor and debtor. The peasant is the debtor. He must pay a large share of his hard-won earnings to the idle lord who does nothing for him in return. Around the crumbling château we see that sympathy and love are crumbling and falling into dust, while envy and hatred rise up and grow strong. The nobleman stands alone and isolated—a stranger among his vassals. With smouldering rage in his heart the hard-worked, half-starved peasant hands over to his lord a portion of the scanty wheat-crop that has escaped the ravages of the lordly pigeons and deer. With sullen anger, too, he gives to the *seigneur* a portion of the wine he has made, and one-sixteenth of the flour which is made at the mill of the lord. When he sells a field for 600 francs, he resigns with

suppressed fury one hundred to his master. But wait. Wait till 1789. Wait till the storm of the Bastille has given the signal that the cup of bitterness is full, and the bell of *Notre Dame* has tolled the death-knell of the Feudal Age ; and we shall see the smouldering rage of the imbruted peasant burst forth into a flame—a flame that will consume the pigeon-house and the ancestrai château, and drive the naked lord out into the darkness, upon the pitchforks of his former serfs.

CHAPTER V.

ABSENTEE LANDLORDS.

WHEN we pass from the lands where the nobles resided to those that were owned by absentees, the spectacle becomes still sadder. For these absentee nobles and clerical dignitaries were the privileged persons of the privileged classes—the aristocracy of the aristocracy. By their residence at the royal court, by their intermarriages and mutual visits, by their manners and their luxury, by the influence which they exercised and the hostility which they excited, they formed a group apart. They it was who possessed the vastest estates and the most extensive seigniories. The smallness of their numbers—for there were only about a thousand each of the upper nobility and the upper clergy—rendered still more conspicuous and odious the immensity of their monopoly. We have already seen that the appanages of the princes of the blood comprised one-seventh of the territory of France. From his forests and his canal alone the Duke of Orléans, before marrying a wife as rich as himself, drew an income of a million. The seignior of Clermontois, belonging to the Prince de Condé, contained forty thousand inhabitants; and not merely

the usual feudal fees which swelled the purse of the *seigneur* belonged to this prince, but even the taxes which elsewhere belonged to the central government accrued to his Most Serene Highness (*Son Altesse Sérénissime*). The Archbishop of Cambray, who was at the same time Duke of Cambray and Count of Cambrésis, possessed the suzerainty of all the fiefs in a region which contained 75,000 inhabitants. He chose half the aldermen of Cambray and the entire administrative body of Cateau; he named the abbots of two large abbeys; he presided over the provincial assembly and the permanent bureau which succeeded it. Near him, in Hainaut, the abbot of Saint-Amand owned seven-eighths of the provostship and received on the remaining eighth the seigniorial rents, *corvées*, and tithes; moreover, he named the provost and the aldermen.

According to the avowal of their own official organs in 1788, the 131 bishops and archbishops had together 5,600,000 francs of episcopal revenue and 1,200,000 in abbeys, that is, an average income of 50,000 apiece, according to their own admission, but 100,000 in truth. "What is a bishop?" was a question that some one asked in that time. "A bishop," was the reply, "is a *grand seigneur* with an income of a hundred thousand," which in our own day would be worth *two* hundred thousand. Thirty-three of the abbots received incomes which, when estimated in modern French money, ranged from one to five hundred thousand francs apiece, and twenty-seven of the abbesses incomes ranging from eighty to four hundred thousand.

The recipients of all these gigantic incomes squeezed from the starving poor should surely have resided upon their estates and performed some service in return. But the officials of the Crown had politically supplanted them, and the gregarious national character of the French impelled them toward the capital. That they should come to the Court was, moreover, the desire of the monarch, whose splendor was the greater, the greater the number of lords to revolve as satellites around him. By such courtly services the nobles were sure of obtaining from the King governorships, military commands, bishoprics, fiefs, pensions, sinecures of every species and description. Not to come to the Court was to neglect a duty to His Majesty and to incur his displeasure; so that the cabinet ministers of the King wrote to the intendants to inquire whether the nobles of their respective provinces liked to stay at home, and whether they refused to come and pay their respects to the King. The Court of Versailles was a great permanent *salon*, the scene of a great permanent festival, where the nobleman had naught to do but to be ever in proximity to his royal master, to show himself, to cut a figure, to amuse himself, and to converse, at the centre of news, of action and affairs, with the *élite* of the kingdom and the arbiters of *ton*, elegance, and taste. "Sire," said a courtier to Louis XIV., "to be away from Your Majesty is not merely to be unhappy; it is to be ridiculous." To be exiled from the Court and compelled to live on his country estate was the worst disgrace for a nobleman; and to the humiliation was

added the *ennui* of the situation. In the eyes of the French courtier of that age the loveliest country seat was a frightful "desert." "Exile alone," says Arthur Young, an intelligent English country gentleman who, just on the eve of the Revolution, travelled through France in all directions for three years, "forces the French nobility to do what the English do by preference: to reside upon their estates to improve them." "There is not a single estate of considerable size in the kingdom," said the elder Mirabeau in 1756, "of which the proprietor is not at Paris, and does not consequently neglect his estate." Besides the exiles, only the poorer nobles stayed in the country. The rest were at Paris and Versailles. "All France was there," frequently said Saint-Simon and other chroniclers in speaking of festivities at the court. And all of France that counted for anything *was* there. The millions who worked and starved counted for naught at the gorgeous court of *Louis le Grand*. The consequence of this neglect of their country estates by the nobility was that a third of the soil of France was as badly cultivated and as unproductive as Ireland in the worst days of absenteeism. "All the signs I have seen of their grandeur," says Arthur Young, in speaking of the vast estates of the Prince de Soubise and the Duke de Bouillon, "are heaths, moors, deserts, fern-beds. Visit their castles, wherever they may be, and you will find them in the midst of forests inhabited by deer, wild boars, and wolves."

And if the nobility thus allowed the land to grow wild and uncultivated, how could it be otherwise

with the peasants? Cut off from the upper class, and, as we shall hereafter see, from the middle class also, that is, from both of those classes who, by intercourse with them, would have introduced new ideas and refining and civilizing influences among them, living in misery and squalor, how could the peasants of France have been much better than brutes? And when at length the signal came, what was there to prevent their rising up and overwhelming their oppressors with fire and sword? But of this the nobles knew nothing. Absolutism had so long reigned supreme in France that no one thought of the possibility of the masses rising up in arms. The idyllic pictures of the peasantry that were painted by the master-hand of Rousseau infused, indeed, a spirit of sentimental compassion for the poor into the minds of the upper classes, but produced the false impression that the villager was a good, gentle, humble, grateful, simple-hearted creature. And how should the gay, bespangled lord, who passed his butterfly existence in the illumined ball-rooms of Versailles, know aught of the true nature of the wretched inmate of a filthy cabin? How could he know that beneath the seemingly gay exterior of the peasant—for not even misery can wholly suppress the natural buoyancy of man, and especially of a Frenchman—there lurked the ferocity of a tiger?

It is cheap and easy for demagogues and doctrinaires to rant with indiscriminate abuse against kings and nobles; but impartial History must remember that kings and nobles, like other men, are human

beings, and that their specific faults are due to the specific circumstances in which they are placed. The French nobles were by no means worse at heart than other men. Shortly before the Revolution they discussed with enthusiasm the "rights of man," "liberty," "equality," and the other similar current phrases. They said, too, that it was necessary to succor the suffering people; but their ideas were entangled in vague generalities and were utterly unpractical. Coming but seldom in contact with the peasantry they knew but little of their real condition; and consequently their sympathy was intellectual and vaguely philanthropic rather than immediate and in the feelings. The compassion of a man who actually sees but one human being in the agonies of death from starvation is far more powerfully excited than that of one who merely hears or reads of starving thousands in a distant province. This is human nature, and it is useless to rail at it. The French nobles at Versailles saw and knew almost as little of the peasants who toiled and starved that they might dance as their descendants know of the red-skinned followers of Sitting Bull and Hole-in-the-Day. Had they resided on their estates, and become personally acquainted with their peasants, they could and would have been more lenient towards them. But, instead of this, each of them employed an agent (*régisseur*) to collect the tithes and other dues from the peasants. Thus, the proprietor, being absent and failing to come in contact with the laborers, thought but little of their sufferings; while the agent who had bargained to hand over a fixed sum to the

lord had no right to be generous at the expense of his employer, and was not likely to pay out of his own pocket any deficiency. Moreover, he was frequently of a low and mercenary character, like the negro-traders in the Southern States before the Civil War, and not only collected rigorously from the peasants all that they owed their lord, but only too often levied an additional tax for his own selfish ends. The same was true when the noble rented out to a tenant, for a fixed sum, his estate and the feudal rights attached to it. The tenant, in this case, like the agent in that, was regarded by the peasantry as a "ravening wolf." The Duke d'Aiguillon spoke truly when he said in a speech in the National Assembly on that famous Fourth of August, 1789, when Feudalism in France was overthrown: "The proprietors of feudal estates are but rarely guilty of the excesses which their vassals so complain of; but their agents are often pitiless."

But even when a *seigneur* desired to withdraw the administration of his estate from the mercenary hands of the agent, he may have been unable to do so. He was perhaps in debt, and had been forced to hand over to his creditors such and such a portion of his land or such and such a branch of his feudal revenue. For centuries the luxury, extravagance, and carelessness of the upper nobility, and that false pride which made them think it beneath the dignity of a nobleman to concern himself with pecuniary matters, had been accumulating and increasing their debts. To be careless about money matters was then, as it is now by some people, considered the

mark of a gentleman. "Archbishop," said Louis XVI. to M. de Dillon, "they tell me that you are in debt, and deeply, too. Is it so?" "Sire," replied the prelate, with the irony of a *grand seigneur*, "I will inquire of my steward, and shall then have the honor of imparting to Your Majesty the desired information." In 1785 the Duke de Choiseul estimated his property in his will at fourteen, and his debts at ten millions. The Duke of Orléans, the richest proprietor in the kingdom, owed seventy-four millions at his death. Nothing but marriages for money and the favor of the King could replenish the coffers of the nobility. Hence it was that, following the example of the King himself, they turned everything possible into money, especially the places of which they disposed; and, giving up authority for pecuniary profit, lost the last vestige of sovereignty that remained to them. Everywhere they laid aside the venerated character of chief to assume the odious character of trafficker. "The most of them," says Renauldon, a contemporary, "sell their [judicial] offices." "What happens then? Justice, too often exercised by scoundrels, degenerates into robbery or into an alarming impunity" for crime. All the seigniorial courts, say the election platforms (*cahiers*) of 1789, are infested with a crowd of officials of all kinds, there being frequently as many as ten in a district which could not support two unless they had other means of making a living. Hence they were at the same time judges, attorneys, fiscal agents, clerks, notaries, etc., each in a different place, each serving in several seignories and under various

titles, all itinerant, all in collusion like "confidence-men" (*fripous en foire*), and meeting at the tavern to fiddle, drink, and sell justice to the highest bidder. Receiving but meagre salaries, these judicial leeches indemnified themselves by practising extortion upon the peasants. It is easy to imagine, therefore, the tyranny, corruption, and negligence of such a régime. "Nowhere," says Renauldon, "is impunity for crime greater than in the seigniorial courts. . . . No notice is taken of the most atrocious crimes." For the *seigneur* is unwilling to undergo the expense of a criminal trial; and his judges and attorneys are afraid of not being paid for their proceedings. Hence his lands become the asylum for all the criminals of the neighborhood. But wait. The day will come when the officials whom he has uselessly multiplied will demand his head, and the bandits whom he has tolerated will carry it aloft on the point of a pike!

CHAPTER VI.

PATRICIAN MONOPOLY OF THE CHASE.

BESIDES his office as judge, which he usually sold to mercenary rascals, there was another sphere in which the authority of the *seigneur* was still active and severe, and even more hurtful and hated. This was his monopoly of the right to hunt. This sounds at first like a trivial matter. But it will be seen, after examining the circumstances, that it was a weighty one.

During the anarchy of the Middle Ages, when the nobleman was the fully armed and mounted military protector of his domain, when half the land was covered with forests or lying fallow, and wild beasts ravaged the other half, there was some reason for the nobleman's being the chief hunter. He was the hereditary man-at-arms, who fought against wolves and wild boars as well as against tramps and brigands. But now that nothing remained to this chieftain but the title and the epaulettes, his privilege had ceased to be a service and had become a vexation. The exclusive right to hunt was now the badge of a hateful class-distinction.

The nobles, even when dignitaries of the Church, were greatly addicted to the chase—in spite of edicts and the canon law. “You hunt a great deal,

Bishop," said Louis XV. to M. de Dillon. "How is it that you prohibit the chase to your curates when you pass your life in setting them the example?" "Sire, my curates are not noble; for them hunting is a fault of their own; for me, it is the fault of my ancestors." The pride of caste being thus enlisted, the nobles guarded this right with the greatest vigilance. Hence it was that their captains of the hunting-grounds (*capitaines de chasse*), their foresters and game-keepers protected the wild beasts from intruders as if they had been men, and hunted down men as if they had been wild beasts. In the district of Pont l' Evêque, in 1789, we read of "four recent unpunished assassinations of poachers by the game-keepers of Mme. d'A., of Mme. N., of a prelate and of a marshal of France." We read also that the Count d'Oisy was in the habit of hunting on horseback and riding through the grain-fields of twenty villages in the environs of his château, and that his armed game-keepers had killed several peasants under pretext of watching over the rights of their master. In this district the game devoured every year the best of the crop, twenty thousand *razières* of wheat, and as much of other grains. Around Évreux, the tender care for the game was such that the peasants were not permitted to pull up in the summer the weeds that choked the wheat. The game-keepers of the forest of Gouffray in Normandy "were so terrible," we are told, "that they maltreated, insulted, and murdered men." If a farmer went to law to recover damages for the loss of his grain, the result was that, in addition

to his crop, he lost his time and the costs of the suit. In the environs of Domfront the inhabitants of more than ten parishes were obliged to watch the whole night, during more than six months of the year, in order to preserve their crops from the game. But it was in the *Île de France*, that is, in the province which contained Paris and Versailles, that this state of things was worst. An official report tells us that in the single parish of Vaux near Meulan the rabbits from the neighboring warrens ravaged eight hundred cultivated acres (*arpents*) and destroyed a harvest of two thousand four hundred measures (*setiers*), that is, the annual nourishment of eight hundred persons. Not far off, at la Rochette, herds of deer devoured everything in the fields during the day, and, at night, even went into the gardens of the people and injured the young trees. Out of 500 peach trees planted in a vineyard at Farcy, less than twenty survived the browsing of the deer for three years. An estate which had been rented for 2,000 francs brought in only 400 after the establishment of the captaincy of Versailles. D'Argenson tells us in his memoirs that the Sieur de Montmorin, captain of the chase of Fontainebleau, drew immense sums from his office, and acted like a veritable brigand; in consequence of which the inhabitants of more than a hundred villages ceased to sow their fields, knowing that the fruits and grains would be devoured by the deer and other game. At Bois-le-Roi, near Fontainebleau and Melun, three-quarters of the land lay waste. Nearly all the houses of Brolle were in

ruins; and at Coutilles and Chapelle-Rablay five farms were abandoned. At Arbonne a quantity of fields were deserted, and at Villiers and Dame-Marie eight hundred acres remained uncultivated. And strangely enough, in proportion as the manners of the century grew more humane, the régime of the chase grew worse. In 1789, one hundred patches of cover for the game were planted in a single canton of the captaincy of Fontainebleau, in spite of the remonstrances of the proprietors. By the regulation of 1762 every individual residing within the limits of a captaincy was forbidden to enclose his property with walls, hedges, or ditches, without special permission. And even in case of permission he was obliged to leave an empty space broad enough for the noble hunters to pass through with ease. The peasants were forbidden to own any fire-arm or other weapon suited for the chase, and were not allowed to own a ferret or a dog, unless it were kept tied. The peasant was not even permitted to mow his hay before St. John's day, or to enter his own field from the 1st of May to the 24th of June, or to go to the islands of the Seine, or to cut grass there, even if the grass belonged to him. For at this period the partridges were sitting; and for a sitting partridge the noble legislators felt, of course, a deeper concern than they would have done for a peasant woman in child-bed. In short, there were in France four hundred square leagues of territory under the régime of the captaincies; and in *all* France the game, both large and

small, was the tyrant of the peasant. "Every time," says Montlosier in his memoirs in 1789, "that I happened to meet a herd of deer on my route, my (peasant) guides exclaimed: '*Voilà la noblesse!*' there you see the nobility!"

We see, then, another of the disastrous effects of the overthrow of the nobles by the Crown in their political power, without the simultaneous abolition of their privileges, the sole excuse for which would have been the performance of useful public functions. That the French nobility, owing to their absenteeism, failed to perform properly the few local functions which still remained to them, and prostituted justice by the sale of the offices to avaricious plunderers, we have already seen. But there is another kind of service which they might have rendered, and which the English nobility did and do render. The English nobility not merely performed useful local services in the counties, and not merely paid heavy taxes: they served also as representatives of the nation in Parliament, either by hereditary right in the House of Lords or by election in the House of Commons. But in France, which is a continental country surrounded by enemies, and not so protected by the sea as England, the people had assisted the Crown to break the political power of the nobles for the sake of unity and strength. Power had been concentrated in the hands of the King; and of course, with time, the King, being mortal, abused his power. The States-General, which corresponded to the English Parliament, had never met regularly, and they had met for the last time in the year 1614.

Thus France possessed no national legislative body. A few of the provinces had local legislatures ; and the clergy were an organized body. But the clergy defended their own class-interests, while the independence of the provincial legislatures was more apparent than real.

CHAPTER VII.

EGOTISM AND INTOLERANCE OF THE CLERGY.

DE TOCQUEVILLE declares the clergy to have been one of the most independent, enlightened, and liberty-loving bodies of men under the Old Régime. What their enlightenment was we shall hereafter see, when we come to examine their persistent intolerance towards freedom of thought and scientific progress. It is true that they loved independence—especially independence from bearing their share of the public burdens. They also loved liberty—for themselves, but by no means for others. Every five years they met, and in the interval two chosen agents watched over the interests of the order. We have seen how they succeeded in substituting a “free gift” for the compulsory payment of taxes, and how this free gift gradually dwindled in dimensions until they not only paid nothing into the treasury of the country but actually succeeded in drawing out of it a million and a half francs a year. So much the better for the Church; so much the worse for the people. Thanks to the diligent solicitations of the Church’s agents with the royal ministers and judges, the feudal rights of chapters and bishops were maintained, while the complaints

of the public were unheeded. For example, in 1781, in spite of a decision by the Parliament of Rennes, the canons of St. Malo were maintained in their monopoly of the right to own a bake-furnace, to the detriment of the bakers, who wished to cook bread in their own shops, and of the public, who wished cheaper bread. In 1773 a schoolmaster was removed by the Bishop of Langres, in spite of the protests of the inhabitants, and forced to give up his place to a successor appointed by the bishop. In 1770, Rastel, a Protestant, who had opened a school at Saint-Affrique, was persecuted at the demand of the bishop and the agents of the clergy, with the result that his school was closed and he himself imprisoned.

The clergy helped the government only when the government helped them. The tone of command on the part of the King and the submissive air on the part of the clergy did not make the transaction any the less a bargain. In return for a law against the Protestants, or some other advantage, they were willing to increase the size of the "free gift." In this way the Edict of Nantes was gradually revoked in the seventeenth century, article by article—each new persecution being bought by a new bargain; so that, if the clergy aided the government it was only on condition that the government should play the part of the hangman. During the whole eighteenth century the Church took care that the process should go on. In 1717, an assembly of seventy-four Protestants having been surprised at Andure, the men were sent to the galleys and the women to prison. An edict of 1724 declares that all who took part in

a Protestant meeting, or who had any direct or indirect communication with a Protestant preacher, should have their property confiscated, that the women should have their heads shaved and be imprisoned for life, and the men be condemned to perpetual servitude in the galleys. In 1745 and 1746, in the province of Dauphiné, 277 Protestants were condemned to the galleys and a number of women to be flogged. From 1744 to 1752 six hundred Protestants in the east and south were imprisoned, and eight hundred condemned to various punishments. In 1774 the children of a Calvinist of Rennes were taken from him. Up to the very eve of the Revolution, Protestant ministers were hanged in Languedoc, and dragoons were sent against their congregations in the desert; upon one of which occasions bullets passed through the skirts of the mother of Guizot, the historian and statesman. For, in Languedoc, where the clergy was the most influential body in the provincial assembly, the temporal power of the bishops was greater than anywhere else. And with the power to do so came also the desire to make converts with powder and ball. In 1775 Archbishop Loménie de Brienne said to the young King at the Communion: "You will rebuke the system of a culpable toleration. Finish the work undertaken by Louis the Great. It is reserved for you to strike the last blow at Calvinism in your realm." The assembly of the clergy in 1780 declared that throne and altar would be equally in danger if heresy were allowed to break its chains. Even in 1789, the clergy, though reluctantly consenting to

tolerate non-Catholics, complained in their *cahiers*, or platform, that the edict of 1787 was too liberal, and desired that Protestants be excluded from judicial positions, from exercising their worship in public, and from intermarriage with Catholics. They demanded, moreover, the censorship of all books, an ecclesiastical committee to denounce objectionable ones, and ignominious punishments upon the authors of irreligious works. Lastly, the clergy claimed for themselves the direction of the public schools and the supervision of the private ones.

In this intolerance and egotism there is nothing strange. For a corporation, even more than an individual, thinks first, and above all, of itself. In England, where not merely priesthood and nobility, but the people at large, were represented and organized, the upper classes served not merely their own private ends, but also those of the public; but in France the privileged orders, being unopposed by any organized political body, subordinated the general welfare to their selfish interests.

CHAPTER VIII.

SINECURES OF THE NOBILITY.

THE nobility had lost the right to assemble and deliberate, like the clergy, upon measures conducive to their interests ; but by constant attendance at Court they were able to make up for the loss of this right. In fact, the nobility were the source from which the ranks of the upper clergy were recruited. A secret * decision of the Court provided that "all ecclesiastical property, from the most modest priory to the richest abbeys, should be reserved for the nobility." In fact, all fat places, both lay and ecclesiastic, were for them; all sinecures, both lay and ecclesiastic, were for them or their relations, friends, clients, and servants. "France," says Taine, "resembled a vast stable where the blooded horses got double or triple feed for doing nothing or only half work, while the draft-horses did full work on half feed, and sometimes failed to get even that." Nineteen ecclesiastical chapters belonged to noblemen and twenty-five to noblewomen ; and also two hundred and sixty Maltese commanderies to the nobility by right of institution. By royal favor, all the archbishops and all the bishops

* *Mémoires de Madame Campan*, Paris, 1822, vol. i., p. 237.

but five were nobles, as were three-fourths of the commendatory abbots and vicars-general. If we pick out those of the abbesses appointed by the King who had incomes of 20,000 and upwards, we find that they too were of noble blood. Thus the fifteen hundred ecclesiastical sinecures in the gift of the King existed almost solely for the nobles. And, moreover, the richest prelates received, in addition to their episcopal revenues, the richest abbeys. Even according to the official clerical directory (almanac), which puts the figures much lower than they were in reality, we see that M. d'Argentré, Bishop of Séez, had a supplementary income (in addition to his episcopal revenue) of 34,000 francs; M. de Suffren, Bishop of Sisteron, 36,000; M. de Girac, Bishop of Rennes, 40,000; M. de Bourdeille, Bishop of Soissons, 42,000; M. d'Agout de Bonneval, Bishop of Pamiers, 45,000; M. de Marboeuf, Bishop of Autun, 50,000; M. de Rohan, Bishop of Strasburg, 60,000; M. de Cicé, Archbishop of Bordeaux, 63,000; M. de Luynes, Archbishop of Sens, 82,000; M. de Bernis, Archbishop of Alby, 100,000; M. de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse, 106,000; M. de Dillon, Archbishop of Narbonne, 120,000; M. de La Rochefoucauld, Archbishop of Rouen, 130,000. These sums, it will be remembered, were merely supplementary to their episcopal incomes. They were much understated in the official directory; so that to arrive at the true amounts we must double and sometimes treble these figures, and quadruple, and sometimes sextuple them, to obtain the modern equivalents. M. de Rohan had an income, not of sixty

thousand, but of four hundred thousand francs ; and M. de Brienne, without counting his salary as cabinet minister, or the pension of 6,000 francs attached to his blue ribbon (*cordon bleu*), possessed in benefices an income of 678,000, not to mention that the wood felled at one of his abbeys, shortly before his retirement from the cabinet, had brought him in a million francs.

Besides the ecclesiastical ones, there was a goodly number of lay sinecures which fell into the lap of the nobility. For instance, there were in the provinces thirty-seven large governor-generalships and several smaller ones, sixty-six lieutenant-governorships, four hundred and seven special governorships, thirteen governorships of royal palaces, and a number of others—all sinecures, and existing merely for the sake of parade, all in the hands of the nobles, all lucrative, not only from the salary that was paid from the public treasury, but also from the local profits. Here, too, the nobility had allowed themselves to be deprived of political power, political action, and political utility, for the sake of the title, the pomp, and the *cash*. The real governor was the royal *intendant*, whereas the titular *gouverneur* could perform no function of administration without special permission. His business was to give grand dinners ; and even for this permission was necessary—the permission to go and reside in his province. But there was money in it. The governor-generalship of Berry was worth 35,000 a year ; that of Guyenne, 120,000 ; that of Languedoc, 160,000. The special governorship of Havre brought

in 35,000 francs besides the perquisites ; an average lieutenant-governorship, like that of Roussillon, 13,000 or 14,000 ; and a special governorship from 12,000 to 18,000. And of these it should be observed that, in the *Île de France* alone, there were thirty-four—at Vervins, Senlis, Melun, Fontainebleau, Dourdan, Sens, Limours, Étampes, Dreux, Houdan, and other towns that were equally insignificant.

In Languedoc, a province with a legislative body, where the pockets of the tax-payers should have been better protected, three so-called sub-commanders (*sous-commandants*) at Tournon, Alais, and Montpellier received 16,000 a year for doing nothing. Twelve *lieutenants du roi*, or royal lieutenants, were equally useless except for show ; which was also the case with three alleged lieutenant-generals who received 30,000 francs apiece every three years for entirely imaginary services. Similarly, the Count de Caraman, who, as proprietor of the Languedoc canal, received an income of more than 600,000 a year, was given 30,000 additional every three years, for no legitimate cause—unless we say that the fact that he also received frequent and handsome gifts from the province for repairing the canal was such a cause. The province also gave the Count de Périgord a gratuity of 12,000 francs besides his salary as *commandant*, and to his wife an additional gratuity of 12,000 the first time that she honored the provincial assembly with her presence. The province likewise employed forty guards for this same *commandant*, who, together with their captain, received 15,000 a year. The *gouverneur*, too, had eighty or a hun-

dred guards, with numerous privileges, and salaries of three or four hundred a year, but, as the *gouverneur* never resided in the province, with nothing whatever to do. For these idlers, therefore, the yearly expense to the province was at least 24,000, besides 5,000 or 6,000 for their captain. And to this we must add 7,500 for the secretaries of the *gouverneur*, besides a salary of 60,000 and infinite perquisites for the *gouverneur* himself.

Thus we see that around the great leeches of noble birth there swarmed innumerable lesser leeches equally intent upon sucking the substance from the people. To eat, drink and be merry at the expense of others was the business of their lives. The sessions of the provincial assembly were six weeks' periods of feasting, and the occasions of an expenditure by the intendant of 25,000 francs in dinners and receptions.

CHAPTER IX.

THE VAMPIRES OF VERSAILLES.

THESE numerous statistical figures are tedious, perhaps; but if we wish to understand clearly the causes of that terrific explosion at the end of the eighteenth century, which is even now reverberating in dull rumblings to the furthest verges of the civilized world, we must be willing to examine still other figures.

Let us look at the centre of it all, the Court. Here, as elsewhere, the offices were lucrative sinecures; and, large as were the salaries connected with them, the perquisites were still larger. Passing over the 295 cooks in the royal palace and the waiters at the royal tables, we may mention that the first steward got 84,000 a year in provisions and the like, without counting his salary and the "*grandes livrées*" which he received in money. The first chambermaids of the queen, who are put down in the directory at 150 francs a year, but who actually received 12,000, made in reality 50,000 by the sale of partially consumed candles. Augeard, a secretary, whose place was nominally worth only 900 a year, confessed himself that it brought him in 200,000. The captain of the hunting-grounds of Fontainebleau made a yearly profit of 20,000 francs on the sale of rabbits.

The governess of the King's children, Mme. de Tallard, received 115,000 a year. And so with the rest of them. Grand officers of the palace, governors of the royal mansions, captains of the chase, chamberlains, equerries, gentleman-servants, gentlemen in ordinary, pages, gouverneurs, almoners, chaplains, ladies of honor, ladies of the bedchamber, lady companions, in the palace of the King, in the palace of the Queen, in the palace of Monsieur (the brother of the King) and of Madame (his wife), of the Count d'Artois and the Countess d'Artois, of Mesdames, of Madame Royale, of Madame Elizabeth, and of every princely family, etc., etc.—hundreds of places, with salaries and perquisites, but without duties, all for show and pomp.

It would have been simpler to give all these people their money without appointing them to imaginary positions. And, in fact, the memoirs are full of evidence that the French monarch, in numberless instances, did adopt this simpler method of wasting the people's money upon Duke Tom, Count Dick, or Marquis Harry. Dangeau mentions in his diary numerous cases, for example, in which Louis XIV. rewarded with hard cash the conversion of Huguenot nobles to the true faith. We might multiply almost indefinitely the list of high and noble lords who, upon any or no pretext, plunged their greedy hands into the public treasury. But, to make the list of moderate length, we will only look at the chief of these vampires—the princes and princesses of the blood. Upon one occasion, the King gave the Prince de Conti 1,500,000 francs to pay his debts:

While awaiting the inheritance of his father, the Duke of Orléans received from the King a pension of 50,000 *écus*. After receiving his inheritance, which brought him a yearly income of three million francs, he gave up his pension, but soon received it back again when he told the King that his three millions a year were not sufficient. Twenty years later, in 1780, when Louis XVI. made the so-called *grande réforme de la bouche*, by which he "retrenched" the table expenses, he still gave *Mesdames* (his sisters) 600,000 francs a year for their food alone. Such was retrenchment and reform in that age. Six hundred thousand francs for the meals alone of three aged dames! The two brothers of the King received 8,300,000 francs, besides 2,000,000 in appanages. For the Dauphin, Mme. Royale, Mme. Elizabeth, and Mesdames, 3,500,000; and for the Queen 4,000,000, according to Necker's account in 1784. We learn from Augeard that Calonne, immediately after entering upon his ministry, raised a loan of one hundred millions, of which not a fourth ever entered the public treasury. By far the larger portion of it was snapped up by the blood-suckers of the Court. I will mention but two of the items. Twenty-five millions went to Monsieur (who was afterwards King Louis XVIII.) and fifty-six millions to the Count d'Artois (afterwards King Charles X.). And let me remind the reader once more that all these figures must be doubled to obtain the modern equivalents.

Thus it is that the men who in earlier times were the local chiefs, or, in Homeric phrase, the "shepherds of the people," had now fleeced, flayed, and

deserted their flocks for the privileges, the pomp, and the gold of the court. But wait. The day will come when the fleeced sheep will discover what use has been made of their wool. And on that day the fleecers will find themselves alone; the deserting shepherds will find themselves deserted, and their sheep transformed into wolves. "Sooner or later," said the parliament of Dijon in 1764, "the people will learn that the *débris* of our revenues continue to be lavished in ill-deserved donations, in excessive and numerous pensions, upon the same persons, in dowries, sinecures, and useless salaries." And sooner or later—it might have added—the people will rise up and crush the greedy ring of aristocrats that prey upon their vitals.

CHAPTER X.

PRINCE AND PRELATE *versus* SQUIRE AND CURATE.

HAVING forgotten the public, the high aristocracy of France neglected also the subordinate members of their own class. Like generals on furlough, who had neglected amidst their revelry to keep the confidence and affection of the lower officers, they had forgotten that, on the day of battle, they would be nothing but generals without an army, and that the soldiers would seek other leaders among themselves. The great lords and prelates of the Court were isolated from the lesser rural nobility and the lower clergy. Against the grasping clique at Versailles a dull murmur had been rising and growing for a century, until, at last, it became a clamor, in which the spirit of the old and the spirit of the new, the spirit of rustic Feudalism and of the new radical philosophy thundered in unison. "The nobility," said the bailiff of Mirabeau in 1781, "is disgracing and ruining itself." "The Court!" cried d'Argenson, "in that word lies all the evil. The Court has become the senate of the nation. The meanest valet in Versailles is a senator; the very chambermaids take part in the government, if not to decree, at least to obstruct legislation. . . .

The Court is the tomb of the nation." The father of Chateaubriand, a rustic nobleman, was a hater of the Court. Many army-officers among the lesser nobility, seeing that none but the lords of the Court could hope for promotion, quit the service and retired to their estates, to brood in wearisome idleness over disappointed hopes and ambitions. The Marquis de Ferrières said in 1789: "The most of them are so disgusted with the Court and the ministers that they are almost democrats." And when these discontented rural nobles came to elect delegates to those celebrated States-General of 1789 which annihilated the Old Régime, they bitterly opposed the election of the great lords, and insisted, in their platform, upon the curtailment of the privileges of the Court nobility.

Still greater was the hatred of the lower clergy towards the great magnates of the Church. For to the sense of injustice was added the fact that the latter were nobles while the former belonged to the plebeian class of *roturiers*. While the great prelates lived at Versailles in pomp and luxury, the simple country parsons lived often in penury and even filth. "I pity the lot of a country parson," says Voltaire, "who, in order to live, is obliged to dispute with his wretched parishioner a sheaf of wheat, to go to law against him, to exact the tithe of pease and lentils, to consume his miserable life in continual quarrels. . . . Still more do I pity the parson to whom rich tithe-owning monks dare to give a salary of but forty ducats for performing, during the whole year, at a distance of two or three

miles from his house, by night and by day, in sun and in rain, in snow and in ice, the most painful and disagreeable functions." In 1785 the salary of a country curate was but 700 francs, or about 140 dollars, and that of a vicar half as much. Living among miserable creatures who expected him to give alms out of even this slender pittance, the country parson felt a secret bitterness of heart against the idle plutocrats of the upper clergy, with their plethoric purses and scanty charity. At Saint-Pierre de Barjouville, for example, where the Archbishop of Toulouse took half of the tithes, he gave but eight francs a year in charity. And this is but one example among many similar ones. As it was usually the business of the *seigneur* or beneficiary to keep the church and the parsonage in repairs, it happened frequently, on account of his absenteeism, indebtedness, or indifference, that both church and parsonage fell in ruins. "I arrived," says a curate of Touraine, "in the month of June, 1788. . . . The parsonage would resemble a hideous cave if it were not open on all sides to wind and frost." He describes the house as having on the first floor two brick-paved rooms, four feet and a half high, without doors or windows, and a third room, six feet in height, which served as parlor, dining-room, kitchen, laundry, and as the damp receptacle for the rain-water of the yard or garden. In the upper story were three similar apartments, the whole being absolutely full of cracks and splits in the wall that menaced ruin, and without doors or sashes that would hold. Contrast all this with the gorgeous

palaces of the great prelates, with their grand equipages and their kitchen utensils of massive silver; and we need wonder little at the hatred borne them by the rank and file of the clergy. These latter it was, too, who had to bear the chief burden of the "free gift" to the Crown. In the diocese of Clermont, the curates contributed for this purpose from 60 to 120 francs apiece and more. The prelates paid but little; and for the plebeian curate there was no hope of rising to a high place in the hierarchy of the Church. Like the subordinate officer in the army, he too had to give up the hope of promotion. Hence it was that, when the time came for choosing delegates to the States-General, the rural clergy treated their chiefs as the rural nobility treated theirs. Everywhere the curates attempted to elect only curates, and to exclude, when possible, not merely the canons, the abbots, the priors, and all other beneficiaries, but also the first chiefs of the hierarchy, that is, the bishops and archbishops. And so great was their success that, out of three hundred clerical delegates to the States-General, two hundred and eight were curates. And at the critical moment, when the Third Estate had declared itself to be the true and only "National Assembly," it was the lower clergy and the lower nobility who went over to them, and thus turned the scale in favor of the people against the aristocracy.

CHAPTER XI.

ABSOLUTISM OF THE KING.

HAVING examined the privileges of nobility and clergy, it remains to examine the most enormous privilege of all—that of the King; for among this staff of hereditary nobles, he was the hereditary general. And although his office was not a sinecure to the same extent as their rank, it was accompanied by still greater temptations and still greater evils. For, while the nobility had lost almost entirely their legitimate occupation, the power and the occupation of the monarch had become, in theory at least, as boundless as the aims of the state and the people. *L'état, c'est moi*, "I am the State," said Louis XIV. The Crown had taken upon itself a task that surpasses the capacity of man. Well-nigh all political functions were centralized, as will hereafter appear, and local self-government all but annihilated.

For the present, however, I will defer the consideration of the administrative centralization, and point out the more personal privileges of the King. As each noble possessed his estate, so did the King, the feudal chief of the nobles, consider that he owned as private property the whole of the Kingdom. All France being therefore his estate, who had the right to ask what use he made of its reve-

nues? And not only was he, according to the feudal theory of the Middle Ages, the proprietor of France and the French; but in addition, according to the theory of the jurists, he was, like Cæsar, the sole and perpetual representative of the nation; and, according to the theologians, the master of the people by divine right. The public treasury being therefore identical with that of the monarch, it was as impertinent to meddle with the money-matters of the latter as with those of a private citizen. Hence it was regarded as a piece of almost inconceivable temerity when, in 1788, the theory was enunciated in the *Salon* of the *Palais-Royal* that the public revenues should not be at the disposal of the King, except a sum sufficient to defray the expenses of the royal household, but should be deposited in the public treasury, to be employed only for the purposes designated by an assembly representative of the nation. In the reign of Louis XIV. such a proposition would have been received with still greater amazement than a communistic proposal in our own day to divide the income of every rich man into two parts, the smaller for his own use, and by far the larger to be disposed of by the legislature. Such a proposition would, indeed, have been almost impossible in 1688; and that it *was* made in 1788 was no uncertain sign of the immense revolution which had already taken place in the whole attitude of the French mind. For the actual Revolution, as we shall see, was but the violent symptom of a revolution in thought already accomplished.

But the shock of 1789 was necessary to show the

King that the day was past when he could look upon France as his private property, to be used or abused as he thought fit. Louis XIV. and Louis XV. had waged wars to gratify their vanity, to further their dynastical or personal interests, or to satisfy the caprices of a mistress. For these and similar ends, the King thought he had the right to expend both the blood and the money of his subjects. For his mistress, Madame de Pompadour, Louis XV. spent 36,000,000 francs. According to d'Argenson, the royal stables contained in 1751 four thousand horses; and the expenses of the royal household, in that year, were sixty-eight millions, or nearly a fourth of the public revenue. And why not? Was not the public revenue the *King's* revenue? Why should not Louis XVI. have purchased for Marie Antoinette the palace of St. Cloud for 7,700,000? For was this not a trifle in comparison with the 477,000,000 which were then the income of His Majesty? If France and the French were the chattels of the King, why should he not have given his own money to his favorites? What objection was there to his bestowing the honor and the salary of a colonelcy upon the sons of dukes, ministers, and other courtiers, upon the relations and friends of his mistresses, when they reached the age of sixteen? If colonels of sixteen were not likely to add to the efficiency of the army, whose business was that? Was it not the *King's* army?

To these questions the Revolution made answer; and it was high time. For when Necker became Minister of Finance he found that the treasury was

being drained of twenty-eight millions a year for pensions; and even during his reform administration the Countess de Polignac received 400,000 francs to pay her debts, 800,000 for the dowry of her daughter, besides the promise, for herself, of an estate yielding 35,000 a year, and, for her lover, the Count de Vaudreuil, a pension of 30,000 a year. The Princess de Lamballe received 100,000 *écus* a year. But under the ministry of Calonne the royal extravagance became almost boundless. To do a favor to the bankrupt Guemenées the King gave them 12,500,000 francs for three estates for which they had just paid only four millions. The family of the Polignacs received 700,000, and that of the Noailles two millions, a year. The King forgot, or cared little, if he remembered, that the millions lavished upon idle courtiers were squeezed from the hands of starving peasants. He forgot, amid the pomp and ceremony of the Court, that a day of reckoning might come, when the rabble would clamor for his head, and lead him to the scaffold to atone for his murderous expenditure of their treasure.

CHAPTER XII.

LIFE AT THE COURT.

THE pomp and ceremony of the Court have been mentioned more than once; and this will be a fitting place to describe it.

Never since the world began, unless in some of the Oriental despotisms, has its equal been seen. Arthur Young was repeatedly and forcibly struck by the strange lack of vehicles * upon the roads of France; but there was one road—that from Paris to Versailles—upon which a ceaseless stream of equipages rolled from morning till night. Versailles, which was then as large a city as Richmond, Va., was, in spite of its 80,000 inhabitants, but a mere appendix of the Court. Though one of the most considerable cities in the kingdom, it was but a royal residence—filled, peopled, and occupied by the life of a single man. It existed solely to supply the needs, the amusements, the servants, the guards, the society, the display of the King. In Versailles, as elsewhere, there were inns, public houses, shops, and huts for the laborers, domestics, common soldiers, and the like; but all was there for the purpose of

*A. Young's "Travels in France," *passim*. I was unable to procure the original of this all-important work, but had to content myself with a French translation, *Voyages en France*, Paris, 1793.

ministering to the King and his noble satellites. Except these necessary inns, etc., the city consisted of palaces and gorgeous edifices with sculptured façades, cornices, balustrades, and monumental staircases—lordly buildings, grouped and arranged in artistic order around the vast and magnificent palace of the man who, by divinely obtained right, was master of France. In these sumptuous abodes dwelt the families of France's bluest blood—the dukes and counts and bishops and archbishops—the men who spent here at the Court the vast incomes of their distant estates. On the right of the royal palace was the palace, or, as it was called, the *hotel de Bourbon*, the *hotel d'Ecquevilly*, the *hotel de la Tremouille*, the *hotel de Condé*, the *hotel de Maurepas*, the *hotel de Bouillon*, the *hotel d'Eu*, the *hotel de Noailles*, the *hotel de Penthièvre*, the *hotel de Broglie*, the *hotel of the Prince de Tingry*, the *hotels d'Orléans*, de *Châtillon*, de *Villeroy*, d'*Harcourt*, de *Monaco*; on the left, the *pavillion d'Orléans*, the *pavillion de Monsieur*, the *hotels de Chevreuse*, de *Balbelle*, de *l'Hôpital*, d'*Antin*, de *Dangeau*, de *Pontchartrain*, etc., etc., etc. By hundreds might be counted the palaces and buildings in Versailles occupied by the King and his dependants. Not a hundred steps could have been taken in the city without coming upon some accessory of the vast central palace. Not only were there "hotels" for all the great nobles, the generals, and the ministers of the government; but there was a hotel for the grand chief of the royal wolf-hunters, for the grand chief of the falconers, for the grand master of the hounds; there

was a grand dog-kennel, and a dog-kennel for the Dauphin—and so on, *ad infinitum*. Everything in this city was “grand.”

And in Paris, too, there were, of course, countless mansions belonging to the butterflies of the Court; and in the environs of Paris and Versailles, scores of towns that were nothing but appendices to the Court, or reproductions of it in miniature. For example, Sceaux, Genevilliers, Brunoy, l'Île Adam, Raincy, Saint-Ouen, Colombes, Saint-Germain, Saint-Cloud, Marly, Bellevue, Fontainebleau, and many others.

Never, since the days of the Cæsars, had so vast a space under the sun been filled with the life of one man. I shall not attempt to describe the gorgeous palace—the cost of which was one hundred and fifty-three millions of francs—or the superb and magnificent gardens and park; but, leaving this to the reader's imagination, will try and depict briefly the kind of life that was led at the Court.

Life, for these men and women, was one endless parade and show. Liveries, uniforms, costumes, equipages of unapproachable brilliancy and variety formed the component parts of an ever-changing, kaleidoscopic splendor. For each of the noble *grandees* it was necessary to keep open, at all times, a grand and magnificent house. His retinue and his ornaments were a part of his person, and his palace had always to be full. To retrench expenses and reduce his retinue was to sink from his high position. Hence it was that, when Louis XVI. attempted to introduce reforms, the courtiers declared

that he acted like a *bourgeois*. When a prince or princess became of age, he or she received a household—*maison*. When a prince married, his wife received one also. And by a household was understood a body of domestics consisting of fifteen or twenty distinct groups for fifteen or twenty distinct kinds of service. There were grooms and coachmen, there was a hunting-train, a chapel, a medical faculty, servants for the bed-chamber, for the wardrobe, for the kitchen, for the pantry, for the wine-cellars; there was a cabinet and a council, and so on, and so on. Without all this, a princess was not a princess. The *maison* of the Duke of Orléans numbered 274 persons, that of *Mesdames* 210, that of the Countess d'Artois 239, that of the Countess de Provence 256, that of the Queen 496. When the household to be given to Madame Royale, aged one month, was being discussed, Marie Antoinette desired to suppress at least a part of the useless pomp; but even then this infant received a body of eighty persons for the service of her single person! The civil household of *Monsieur* comprised 420, and his military household 179 persons, that of the Count d'Artois 237, and his civil household 456.

By far the majority of all these people were, of course, entirely useless, except for display. With their embroidery and lace, with their refined and easy expression of countenance, their discreet and attentive air, their graceful way of bowing and walking and smiling, they were the living and moving ornaments of the ante-chambers and galleries of the great. Even in the stables and kitchens of the no-

bility was the same grace and elegance, the same pomp and display.

Such being the splendor of the satellites and planets, what shall we say of the dazzling effulgence of the Royal Sun! His Majesty's guard, consisting of infantry, cavalry, body-guards, the French Guards, the Swiss Guards, the company of the Hundred Swiss, the Light-horse Guards, the Gendarmes of the Guard, the Guards of the Gate, contained in all 9,050 men, at a yearly cost of nearly eight millions. When the king drove to Paris or Fontainebleau, four trumpets sounded in front and four in the rear, and the gorgeous coach passed between a long double line of soldiers, the Swiss Guards on one side and the French Guards on the other. In front of the coach marched the Hundred Swiss in the costume and arms of the sixteenth century. In all the corps the officers, the trumpeters, and the musicians gleamed with gold lace, and were dazzling to look upon. Behind, and at the sides of the carriage, ran the twelve hundred body-guards, with swords and carbines, in red trousers, high boots and blue coats with white embroidery—all noblemen, chosen for their blue blood and handsome figures.

So much for the safety of the monarch. But being himself a nobleman, he was, of course, a horseman. And, being the greatest of the noblemen, his stables were like palaces and contained a vast number of horses, with more than two hundred carriages and more than 1,500 liveried men. The cost of the whole, in 1787, but two years before the Revolution, was 6,200,000 francs. The chase, also, as

we have seen, was a favorite amusement of the nobility, and, above all, of the chief nobleman, the King. His kennels, like his stables, were palatial; and the food of his dogs cost more than 53,000 francs in 1783. Around Paris an almost continuous circle with a radius of thirty leagues was a guarded hunting-ground, where game of every description was protected and multiplied for the pleasure of the King. Around Fontainebleau were herds of seventy or eighty deer. Every week there was a wolf-chase; and forty wolves were killed a year. From 1743 to 1774 Louis XV. ran down 6,400 deer. Louis XVI. wrote in his diary on August 31, 1781: "To-day killed 460 head." In 1780 he, with his train, killed 20,534 head of game; in 1781, 20,291; in fourteen years, 189,251. So great, indeed, was his addiction to the chase that, on June 25, 1789, when even the populace of Versailles (who lived by the patronage of the Court) were insulting and attacking the reactionary members of the nobility and clergy, when the Bishop of Beauvais* was struck on the head with a stone, and the windows of the Archbishop of Paris were broken by the mob; only two days after Mirabeau had defied the monarchy in thunder tones, and declared that, as the National Assembly had met in obedience to the might of the people, it should be dispersed only by the might of the bayonet; when vast throngs in Paris were eagerly listening, night and day, to the fiery harangues of revolutionary orators,—at such a time as this, when the

*Arthur Young, vol. i. p. 360.

black clouds of revolution were lowering overhead, and the question was hanging in the balance* whether Louis XVI. was to remain King of France or be reduced to the puppet-rôle of a doge of Venice, that stupid creature was—out hunting!—in blissful ignorance of the fate that awaited him.

As every prince and princess had a private chapel and a private medical faculty, so also the King. And his were, of course, the largest; his chapel consisting of 75 almoners, chaplains, confessors, chanters, composers of sacred music, etc., and his faculty containing 48 physicians, surgeons, apothecaries, oculists, corn-doctors—for even the feet of royalty may be afflicted with corns—and the like.

There were numerous other bodies of domestics; but-passing them by, I will go on to those that ministered to the royal palate. There were three divisions: the first for the king and his younger children; the second, for the table of the grand master, for that of the grand chamberlain, and that of the princes and princesses who lodged in the King's palace; the third for the second table of the grand master, for that of the stewards, that of the almoners, that of the gentleman-servants, and that of the valets-de-chambre. In all, 383 cooks and 103 waiters at an expense of 2,177,771 francs a year. In addition to this, the yearly cost of Mme. Elizabeth's table was 389,173, and that of the tables of *Mesdames* 1,093, 547 francs, making a total for the royal tables of 3,660,491 francs a year. The wine

* Arthur Young, vol. i. p. 362.

merchant's annual bill was 300,000, the bill for game, meat and fish a million francs.

And if we enter the sleeping apartment of the King we find another vast body of servants. Two dignitaries preside over them, each with a hundred subordinates: on the one hand, the grand chamberlain, with the first gentlemen of the bed-chamber, the pages of the bed-chamber, their governors and preceptors, the ushers of the ante-chamber, the valets of the bed-chamber, the cloak-bearers, the barbers, the porters, etc.; on the other hand, the grand master of the wardrobe, with the masters of the wardrobe, the valets of the wardrobe, the tailors, the gentlemen in ordinary, the ushers, and so on—in all 198 persons.

Such was the household of the King of France at *one* of his residences. But, besides Versailles, there were a dozen more: Marly, the two Trianons, la Muette, Meudon, Choisy, Saint-Hubert, Saint-Germain, Fontainebleau, Compiègne, Saint-Cloud, and Rambouillet—without counting the Louvre, the Tuileries and Chambord,—with their parks and hunting-grounds, with their governors, inspectors, controllers, janitors, gardeners, horse-guards, foot-guards, etc., a thousand persons in all. Three or four millions a year were spent on buildings and plants, and a couple of millions more for furniture and repairs. Whenever the King moved from one of his palaces to the other, a whole army of butchers, bakers, hatters, shoemakers, physicians, surgeons, merchants, tailors, book-sellers, engravers, in short, all conceivable kinds of people were obliged

to accompany him, in order to satisfy at a moment's notice every wish of the monarch and his court.

In all, the King's civil household comprised 4,000 persons, and his military household 9,000 or 10,000; besides at least 2,000 more for his relatives: a total of 15,000 persons, in round numbers, at an annual expense to the people of 40 or 45 millions.

For ordinary mortals, the life of ceremony and formality led by the King of France and his courtiers would be an appalling bore. When the first valet of the bed-chamber had awakened His Majesty in the morning, five distinct series of persons came in five distinct *entrées* to pay him their respects in the royal bed-room. First came the so-called "familiar *entrée*" of the King's children, the princes and princesses of the blood, and also the first physician, the first surgeon, and other useful persons. When they had retired, they were followed by the *grande entrée* of the grand chamberlain, the grand master and the master of the wardrobe, the first gentleman of the bed-chamber, the dukes of Orléans and Penthièvre, and some other favored nobles, the ladies of honor and ladies of the bed-chamber of the Queen, of *Mesdames* and other princesses—without counting the barbers, tailors, and valets of several species. Mean-time spirit of wine is poured over the King's hands in a silver-gilt plate, and he is then presented with a basin of holy water, whereupon he makes the sign of the cross, and says a prayer. He then gets out of bed in the presence of the whole assemblage and dons his slippers. The grand chamberlain and the first gentleman then present him with his dressing-

wrapper, and he seats himself in an arm-chair to be dressed. At this moment the door re-opens, and a third flood of people pours in. These are the lords who have the precious privilege of assisting at the ceremony of putting His Majesty to bed at night; but along with them a whole squad of physicians and surgeons in ordinary, managers of the pocket-money, readers and others; among them the porter of the necessary chair—for so great was the publicity and ceremony of the royal existence that all of its functions were performed in the presence of witnesses. At the moment when the officers of the wardrobe approach the King to dress him, the first gentleman, being informed by the usher, tells the King the names of the great personages who wait at the door. Then comes the fourth *entrée*, still larger than the preceding. Without counting numerous valets of different kinds, it comprises the majority of the great officers, the grand almoner, the master of the chapel, the master of the oratorium, the captain and the major of the body-guards, the colonel and the major of the French guards, the colonel of the King's regiment, the captain of the Hundred Swiss, the grand huntsman, the grand wolf-hunter, the grand master of ceremonies, the first steward, the foreign ambassadors, the ministers and secretaries, the marshals of France, the great prelates, and many others. Ushers arrange the crowd while the King washes his hands and begins his toilet. Two pages remove his slippers; the grand master of the wardrobe takes his night-shirt by the right sleeve, the first valet of the wardrobe by the left sleeve. They pull

it off and hand it to a valet to be carried away, while still another valet approaches with a shirt. This is the solemn moment, the culminating point of the whole pompous absurdity. The honor of presenting the shirt is reserved for the sons and grandsons of France (*i. e.*, of the King, who regards himself as France), or, in case of their absence, for the princes of the blood, or, in *their* absence, for the grand chamberlain or the first gentleman. When the King has taken the shirt, the whole court is introduced in the fifth and last *entrée*, and the toilet proceeds. Definite individuals perform each definite service for the King. One man hands him his handkerchief, another his gloves, another his cane, etc. The toilet being complete, he says his prayers, while a chaplain pronounces in a low voice the orison, *quæsumus deus omnipotens*. This done, the King prescribes the order of the day, and passes with the chief courtiers into his cabinet, the rest remaining in the gallery to accompany him later on, when he goes to mass.

Such was the royal levee; and it was of a piece with the rest of the royal life. The same throng was around the King when he put on his hunting boots, when he took them off, when he changed his coat, when he hunted, when he dined, when he retired. "Every evening for six years," says d'Hézecques, a court page, "my comrades and myself saw Louis XVI. retire to bed in public. I have not seen the ceremony omitted ten times; and then the cause of the omission was accident or indisposition." Of the infinite details of etiquette and ceremony at

the royal repasts we may omit all except to mention that twenty or thirty people attended to the glass and the plate of the King. "If I were King of France," said Frederick the Great of Prussia, "my first edict would appoint an extra-king to perform the ceremonies for me." From the cradle to the grave the French monarch was always in public, always on exhibition, always the central figure of innumerable pompous ceremonies. To smile with dignity and grace, and discourse affably upon horses and dogs and game, was the business of the King. To bow and scrape and be ever on the alert to secure sinecures and pensions was the business of the nobles. For a noble to be absent from the court was almost a crime in the eyes of the monarch. To be ever present and ever bowing and scraping was the surest road to fortune. One night the valet of the Marshal de Noailles asked his lordship at what hour he wished to be awakened in the morning. "Not till ten o'clock," replied the marshal, "unless some one at the Court dies during the night." What he meant was that he wished to apply immediately to the King for the fat sinecures, etc., of any courtier that happened to die. To be always where the King could see him was the noble's aim. "He who reflects," says La Bruyère, "how the countenance of the prince is the source of all the felicity of the courtier, how his life is spent in seeing the prince and in being seen of him, may form some small conception how the sight of God makes all the glory and all the joy of the saints." "Pardon me," wrote a duke to Madame de Maintenon, "the extreme lib-

erty I take in daring to send you the letter I write to the King, in which I implore him, on my knees, to permit me occasionally to pay him my respects; *for I had as soon die as not see him for two months."*

Such was life at the palace of the French King; and life at the hotel or château of every nobleman was a miniature copy of the great royal model. Pomp, parade, ceremony, servility, luxury, publicity, were practised, as far as was possible, at the establishment of every petty squire. We are told by de Luynes that the house of the Duc de Gèvres was full of courtiers from the time he got up till he went to bed. And it was the same with two or three hundred houses at Paris, Versailles and their environs. And not merely the nobles, great and small; the shoddy *parvenus* among the rich *bourgeois* made also as great a display as their purses would allow. They, too, had their levees, their lackeys, their flunkies, and their sponges and parasites. The ministers and ambassadors lived, of course, with a pomp corresponding to their rank. The magnificence, for example, of the Cardinal de Bernis, the ambassador at the Papal Court, was so great that he was called the King of Rome. To ape the splendor of Versailles was the aim of them all—governors-general, commanders, ambassadors, intendants, and the rest. From the central tree at Versailles innumerable ramifications shot forth in all directions. Nor was all this luxury and display confined to the laity. The bishops and archbishops and commendatory abbots were men of the world, rich, fashionable, and anything but austere. At Clairvaux, Dom

Rocourt, polite to men and gallant to women, drove only in a four-horse carriage with an outrider in front of it. His monks called him *Monseigneur*, and he held a regular court. At the convent of Origny, the abbess had her domestics, her carriage and horses, and received male visitors and diners in her apartments. The twenty-five chapters for noblewomen and the nineteen chapters for noblemen were but so many permanent *salons* and perpetual *rendezvous* for fashionable company that was separated only by a feeble ecclesiastical barrier from the rest of the great world. At the chapter of Ottmarsheim, in Alsatia, "we spent a week," says a visitor, "in promenading, in visiting the remnants of Roman roads, in laughing, and even in dancing, . . . and especially in talking about clothes." But nowhere, except at Versailles, were the pomp and the crowd greater than in the episcopal palaces. For the bishops, being princes or great lords, lived also like princes. They had their levees, their ante-chambers, their ushers, their valets, their equipages, their open house, their sumptuous meals, and their debts. In the almost royal palace of the Rohan family, who were bishops of Strasburg and cardinals by hereditary descent from uncle to nephew, there were 700 beds, 180 horses, fourteen stewards, twenty-five *valets de chambre*. Sometimes two hundred guests, and, at all times, twenty or thirty of the most charming women of the province, were at their palace. Everywhere among the upper classes was ceremony and display. Ceremony appeared to be the object of their lives. For example, when the Queen

of Louis XV. wished to dine one day, she was awaited by twelve noblemen in a room with a table and twelve plates. These plates were mere pretense, however; for, when the Queen entered, the twelve noblemen withdrew from the table and looked silently on while she ate. Once only is the silence broken. "Come here, Monsieur So-and-so," says the Queen. The monsieur does so, bows, and she says: "I believe this is a fricassee of chicken?" "That is also my opinion," replies the monsieur, and is dumb once more. This was an extreme case of courtly idiocy; but, owing to the French *esprit*, life at Versailles could never be made so horribly tedious as at the Spanish Court. Still, the laws of etiquette and ceremony were very severe. And they applied even to the young prince in the cradle. Four times a day he was fed and attended to by definite women; but if he was hungry at any other time, or if anything happened to him, he had to stand it as best he could.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MIDDLE CLASS.

HAVING examined the privileges and the idle pomp of nobility, clergy, and king, it is time to take a view of the middle class, or *bourgeoisie*, in its relations to the nobility and peasantry, and in its internal relations.

In the eighteenth century there was, in spite of the differences in rights and privileges, an ever-increasing similarity between the members of the upper and the middle class. Nothing shows this more clearly than a comparison of the *cahiers*, or, in modern American lingo, the "platforms" of the two classes in 1789. They differed in interests and demands, but in other respects were scarcely distinguishable. Time, which had maintained and even aggravated the privileges that separated the noble from the *bourgeois*, had rendered them similar in all other respects. For several centuries the former, in spite of all his exemptions from taxation and other privileges, had been becoming gradually poorer; while the latter, who, instead of living in idleness and luxury at Court, was accustomed to industry and thrift, had been growing gradually richer. The

spendthrift noble had been obliged to sell parcel by parcel of his land to the peasants, until the land reached that state of division into the extraordinary number of excessively small farms which struck Arthur Young so forcibly. But the *bourgeois* was steadily accumulating wealth by manufactures, trade, and commerce. And not merely the pecuniary condition of the two classes was growing more and more similar. Education and mode of life produced many other similarities. The *bourgeois* equalled or even surpassed the nobleman in enlightenment; for both read the same books, both drank from the same fountain of literature that flowed from Paris to the rest of Europe. In rights alone was a great gulf between the two. Feudalism, at its origin, had been, in great measure, a system of true aristocracy, and in England it had remained so. But in France, the nobility, since the Middle Ages, had become a caste. In England, the nobility, though differing in tastes, customs, and education from the other classes, nevertheless came into daily contact with them, and were frequently bound to them by ties of mutual interests. So, too, in France, when the nobility had possessed political power, they had come into contact with the peasantry on their estates and with the *bourgeoisie* in the States-General. But now that the noble and the *bourgeois* had become almost identical in tastes and education, when the rich *bourgeois*, as well as the noble, had his *salon*, his ante-chamber, and his ushers, the two classes were separated by a wider and deeper gulf than ever before. Since political

liberty died, and the States-General ceased to meet, they had no contact in public life; and, in private life, they were kept apart by arrogance and hate. And while the ability, wealth, and importance of the *bourgeoisie* were increasing, the privileges of the nobility were actually growing greater than before. It was still harder under Louis XVI. for a *roturier* to become an army officer than under Louis XIV. In the reign of Charles VII., in the fifteenth century, when the tax called *taille* amounted to but 1,200,000 francs a year, the exemption from it was far from being so valuable a privilege for the nobility as under Louis XIV.; when it amounted to eighty millions a year. When the *taille* was the only tax, the people noticed the exemption of the nobles from paying it far less than when four other similar direct taxes had been added—not to speak of the royal *corvée*, or enforced labor on the public roads, that had been unknown in the Middle Ages.

With all these burdens on the mass of the people, the advantage of the nobility appeared immense. This advantage was, indeed, not quite so great as it appeared; for the taxes sometimes fell upon the nobility, indirectly, through their tenants. But still the inequality was very great. And even if it had not been so, it seemed so, which, for our purpose, is the important fact. For suffering is subjective, and a man's belief that injustice is done him is as potent a cause of discontent as if the injustice were actually committed. In France the injustice was actually enormous, and was severely felt. The more so, from the fact that, even with those taxes

which, at their institution, were intended to fall upon all classes alike, the capitation tax and the *vingtièmes*, care was taken to make the manner of levying them different for the different classes, so that their payment was degrading for the masses but honorable for the nobility. Nowhere in Europe was the inequality of taxation more visible and more constantly felt than in France. And, of all ways of distinguishing between man and man, and between class and class, there is none more pernicious than this, none more likely to foster hatred and isolation. For, see how it acts. Every year, when the taxes are levied, a sharp and definite line, that every one can see, is drawn anew between the classes. Every year the taxed class feels a positive and concrete injustice; and the favored class feels a fresh determination to guard its privilege.

Louis XI. had conferred nobility upon many plebeians, as a means of abasing the hostile nobles; but his successors had done it as a means of pecuniary profit. And they not only sold patents of nobility; they actually forced* *roturiers* to buy them. It was thus possible for a plebeian to attain to patrician rank in France as well as in England. But, as de Tocqueville points out, Burke was wrong in considering this a true analogy. For, apart from the title, the distinction between the English nobleman and any other Englishman was but vague and indefinite. Both paid taxes, both performed duties, and both could be members of Parliament. Not so in

* Louis Blanc, *Histoire de la Révolution Française*, Paris, 1847, vol. i. p. 145.

France. For, although the barrier between the *noblesse* and the *roture* could be surmounted, it was always fixed, always visible, and always to be recognized by glaring and odious signs. At no epoch of history, says de Tocqueville, had patents of nobility been so easily acquired as on the eve of the Revolution; and never had the difference in rights between the *bourgeois* and the nobleman been so complete. The system of selling patents of nobility not only failed to diminish class-hatred, but it actually increased and swelled it by all the envy felt towards the mushroom nobles by their old equals, the *bourgeois*.

Almost the whole of the middle class, under the Old Régime, dwelt in the towns: from two causes—the privileges of the nobility and the taxation. The nobles residing in the country often showed a certain good-natured familiarity towards the peasants; but their insolence to the middle class was almost boundless. Consequently the more well-to-do and educated farmers were glad to get rid of the arrogance of their blue-blooded neighbors by going to the towns. The *taille*, however, and the other taxes, were a much more potent cause of their gravitation from country to town. For the townspeople had a thousand ways of lightening the burden of taxation, or even of avoiding it altogether, which the isolated countryman had not. Still more important than the partial or entire escape from paying taxes was the escape from collecting them; which, as we shall presently see, when examining the state of the peasantry, was a still more grievous burden. Never,

says de Tocqueville, was there, under the Old Régime, or under any other régime, a worse condition than that of the village tax-collector. And no one in the village but the nobles could escape it. The consequence of which, according to Turgot, was that nearly all of the plebeian freeholders in the villages and country moved into the towns.

And here, behind the city walls, they soon lost the tastes of country life and sympathy with the peasants. Being estranged from their former peers, one of the chief aims of such immigrants to the towns was to obtain government offices by which they could get immunity from taxation and other privileges. The number of these offices was probably still greater under the Old Régime than now, in spite of the smaller population at that time. And when we reflect that under Louis Philippe (in this century) there were more than 800,000 of them,* we may form some idea of the state of things before the Revolution. Merely in the brief period between 1693 and 1709 about forty thousand new offices were created; and de Tocqueville counts up 109 persons who were occupied merely in administering justice in an average provincial town in 1750, and 125 persons whose business it was to execute the decrees of the former. Of course vast numbers of these offices were sinecures, and filled those deprived of them with envy, and their possessors with egotistic vanity. Thousands of them exempted their possessors from public duties—this one from military ser-

* Buckle's "History of Civilization," vol. i. p. 451.

vice, that one from the *corvée*, another from the *taille*, etc.

Not only the nobles, therefore, but many of the *bourgeois* were exempt from burdens that were shifted to the backs of the peasants, who thus differed from the middle class not merely in dwelling-place and mode of life, but also in interests. There was, accordingly, nothing more apparent in the eighteenth century than the hostility of the townspeople to the peasants of the suburbs, and the jealousy of the latter toward the former. "The towns," says Turgot, "being occupied with their own private interests, are disposed to sacrifice the country districts and the villages of their neighborhood." And the hostility of the peasants toward the middle class was shown also by the lowest class in the towns. Everywhere in pre-revolutionary France we see hatred and envy between the different classes, and between separate groups within each class.

When we look at the internal constitution of the middle class, we find it divided into endless hostile groups. Not less than three dozen different corporate cliques were to be found among the so-called notables of a small town. These different cliques, though often small, labored incessantly, by purging themselves of heterogeneous elements, to make themselves still smaller; and some succeeded in reducing the number of their members to three or four. Each of these corporations was separated from the others by petty privileges; and the courts resounded with the clamor of their quarrels. There were continual wranglings about the right of precedence in

the general assembly of the notables; and the wig-makers of the town of La Flèche refused to take part in the proceedings, in order to publicly testify, as they said, to the "just grief" that they felt at the precedence granted to the bakers. In another town a part of the notables refused to officiate because some artisans had been admitted, with whom they would feel it a humiliation to be associated.

Thus we see that these guilds and corporations which, in their origin in the Middle Ages,* had been useful democratic organizations for the purpose of gaining or maintaining civil liberty for the weak against the strong, had now degenerated into aristocratic cliques and monopolies. Each of them aimed to contain as few members as possible, that the profits of these few might be correspondingly great. This was carried so far, that the cost of admission into the most insignificant trades † was 400 or 500 francs for an apprentice or journeyman, and actually 3000 or 4000 for a master-baker or locksmith. Until 1755 no one could become a master except in the town where he had learned his trade, unless he was willing to go through a new apprenticeship. These artificial shackles on free competition had long been hateful to many; and even as early ‡ as 1614 the Third Estate of the States-General had moved the abolition of all guilds founded since 1576, and the prohibition of new ones, on the ground that they

* Roscher, "System der Volkswirtschaft," Stuttgart, 1882, iii., § 129.

† Roscher, iii., § 134, note 14.

‡ Roscher, iii., § 134, note 16.

fallen one-half within a few years, on account of the poverty of the people. About the same time Sir William Temple wrote that the French peasants were "wholly dispirited by labor and want"; and in 1691, Burton said that on a trip from Calais to Paris "there was opportunity enough to observe what a prodigious state of poverty the ambition and dissoluteness of a tyrant can reduce an opulent and fertile country to. There were visible," he says, "all the marks and signs of a growing misfortune; all the dismal indications of an overwhelming calamity. The fields were uncultivated, the villages unpeopled, the houses dropping to decay." In 1689 a writer named Somers said: "I have known in France poor people sell their beds, and lie upon straw; all their pots, kettles, and all their necessary household goods, to content the unmerciful collectors of the King's taxes." Dr. Lister, another Englishman who visited Paris in 1698, said: "Such is the vast multitude of poor wretches in all parts of this city that whether a person is in a carriage or on foot, in the street, or even in a shop, he is alike unable to transact business, on account of the importunities of mendicants." In 1708 Addison, who knew France well, wrote: "We think here, as you do in the country, that France is on her last legs." And in 1718 Lady Mary Montague wrote as follows in a letter to Lady Rich: "I think nothing so terrible as objects of misery, except one has the god-like attribute of being able to redress them; and all the country villages of France show nothing else. While the post-horses are changed, the whole town

comes out to beg, with such miserable starved faces, and thin, tattered clothes, they need no other eloquence to persuade one of the wretchedness of their condition."—And not merely English observers noticed the abject misery of the French peasantry. Taine, indeed, has estimated that in the twenty-five years preceding the death of Louis XIV. in 1715, about *six million* French peasants *died of hunger and misery*. In 1725, Saint-Simon wrote that the food of the Norman peasants consisted of herbs, and spoke of the King as a king of beggars, and of the kingdom as a vast hospital of dying men. In 1739, d'Argenson wrote in his diary: "The scarcity of food has just occasioned three uprisings in the provinces at Ruffec, Caen, and Chinon. Women with bread have been assassinated upon the highways." In 1740, Massillon, Bishop of Clermont-Ferrand, wrote to Fleury: "The peasants of our neighborhood live in frightful misery, without beds, without furniture; most of them, during half the year, have an insufficient quantity of the barley and oat bread, which is their sole food, and of which they are compelled to deprive themselves and their children in order to pay their taxes. . . . the negro slaves in our islands are infinitely better off; for, though working, they are fed and clothed, with their wives and children; instead of which our peasants, the hardest workers in the kingdom, are unable, even by the severest and most strenuous labor, to earn bread for themselves and their families, and to pay the taxes." In 1750, d'Argenson speaks of the "frightful misery" of the peasants, and says

that the taxes were collected with a more than military rigor. "The collectors, with the bailiffs, followed by locksmiths, open the doors, carry off the furniture, and sell everything for a fourth of its value—the expenses of the sale amounting to even more than the *taille*. I see nothing but frightful misery"; he continues, ... "despair has come over the wretched people, and they wish only for death." He writes again that Paris was swarming with beggars, all said to be peasants, who, unable to endure longer the vexations of the country, had come for refuge to the city.

And yet the condition of the lower classes in the towns was but little better than in the country. For, at that time, there were twelve thousand laborers begging in Rouen, as many at Tours, and so on. Floquet tells us that in Normandy, in 1752, the common people were entirely without bread, and were compelled, in order to escape starvation, to eat things which shock humanity. D'Argenson mentions that one day, when the Dauphin and Dauphiness were going to the cathedral of Notre Dame at Paris, more than two thousand women assembled and cried: "Give us bread, or we shall die of hunger"; and he says also that in the month between January 20 and February 20, 1753, more than 800 people in the Saint Antoine suburb of Paris died of cold and hunger in their garrets. And this it would be well to remember, when we read that this very suburb was one of the chief sources from which the legions of Robespierre were drawn. All through the country, and all through the eighteenth

century, there were famines and bread-riots in this, that, or the other province or town. In the sole province of Normandy there were riots in 1725, 1737, 1739, 1752, 1764, 1765, 1766, 1767, 1768—and always on the same subject, *bread*. “Entire hamlets,” wrote the parliament, “being without the necessaries of life, were obliged to live on the food of beasts.” During the last-mentioned riot the populace had possession of Rouen for three days, during which they pillaged the public granaries and warehouses. Up to the end of the Old Régime similar explosions took place: in 1770 at Reims; in 1775 at Dijon, Versailles, Saint-Germain, Pontoise, and Paris; in 1782 at Poitiers; in 1785 at Aix in Provence. And lastly, in 1788 and 1789, there was a dearth at Paris and in all France, on the eve of the great final hurricane that swept over the land and laid the rotten edifice of the Old Régime in ruins..

These famines were greatly aggravated by the meddling folly of the government. For, not only was freedom of trade with foreign countries hampered by “protective” tariffs,—but it was actually prohibited between the provinces—each of which was carefully “protected” by lines of custom-houses, erected by the wise rulers of the country. The free passage of grain from one province to the other being thus impeded or entirely prevented, a scarcity in one part of the country could not be relieved by the plenty in another. Even well-disposed ministers of the government only made matters worse by their folly in attempting to make the price of provisions lower by edicts, and by the government im-

portation of grain. By such measures they alarmed the owners of grain, and caused them to raise the price still higher. Thus, when Necker tried this plan, the price of grain,* instead of sinking, rose 25 per cent.

Misery held a carnival in France. The despotism and fatal wars of Louis XIV. had produced their effects. During the latter part of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth the population went backwards, and then came to a standstill for a long time. One-fourth of the soil lay uncultivated, and agriculture returned to the methods of the Middle Ages. Except in Flanders and Alsatia the fields lay fallow one year in three, and, in many places, every second year. Bad agricultural implements; no iron plows; wooden axles to the carts, and wooden tires to the wheels; little live-stock and little manure. Hence the crops were small, and the dread of starvation constant. How to live until the next harvest was the all-important question for the peasants. While the price of bread was as high then as now, the wages of laborers were scarcely more than half what they are at present. The peasants ate the most wretched food, and were sometimes reduced to nettles and the bark of trees. Their houses were wretched hovels, with thatched roofs and dirt floors. For clothes they wore rags, and often they had no stockings or shoes. Their squalor was hideous; and Arthur Young tells us that it was impossible for an English imagination to picture the animals that

* Arthur Young, vol. iii., p. 248-9.

waited on him at an inn in the town of Souillac, beings called women by the courtesy of the inhabitants, but in reality "masses of walking filth." "No Englishman," he says in another place, "can form an idea of the appearance of most of the peasant-women of France"; and in describing one with whom he talked, he says that, though she was but 28 years old, her body was so bent by toil and her face so wrinkled that she seemed sixty or seventy. "God help us," she said, "for we are crushed by the taxes and the privileges of the nobles."

CHAPTER XV.

DIRECT TAXES.

SHE was right. The taxes and the privileges of the nobility were the chief causes of the misery of the peasants.

The direct taxes of the central government were the *taille* and its accessories, the capitation, the *vingtièmes*, and sometimes a tax by way of substitute for the *corvée*, or enforced labor performed by the peasants in building and repairing the public roads and army barracks, in transporting war-munitions, galley-slaves and other criminals from one part of the country to another. Without going into details for the different provinces, we may say that these *direct* taxes *alone* absorbed 53 *per cent.* of the net product (*produit net*) of the peasant proprietor's farm—or nearly five times as much as at present. In addition to these 53 per cent. paid to the government, the peasant * paid about fourteen per cent. more of his farm's net product to his *seigneur*, and an equal amount to the tithe-owning clergy. When all this had been paid, there remained barely 19 per cent. for himself. And with the exception of the *vingtièmes* all these direct taxes fell not

* Taine, p. 484-5.

only on the peasant proprietor but also on the common day-laborer with no real property whatsoever. The rag-picker and the hawker of old iron, the inmate of the cellar and the inmate of the garret, all had to pay in cash the direct taxes, or fall victims to the power of the police.

The amount of the taxes was fixed each year secretly and arbitrarily by the cabinet of the King, so much for each province, after which the intendants and their subordinates, the *subdélégués*, fixed the amount due from each parish. This secret and arbitrary way of changing the amount made it impossible for the tax-payer to know one year what he was to pay the next, and thus rendered all his operations uncertain.

The burden of paying the taxes was enormous, but that of collecting them was still greater. For, unless the collector could collect the fixed amount, he was responsible for the deficiency, all his property being liable to confiscation and his person to imprisonment. We have seen that the dread of this was one cause of the movement of the more well-to-do farmers from country to town. Those who remained had to undertake the task by turns. And it was a task, says Turgot, which caused the despair, and almost always the ruin, of him who undertook it, which reduced successively to misery all the prosperous families of a village. In 1785, in a single district of the province of Champagne, ninety-five collectors were imprisoned. Being grossly ignorant and unable to read, as a rule, the collector had to carry with him a clerk; a system which opened the

door to fraud and corruption. And yet, in spite of his ignorance, his inexperience, and possibly his depravity, this man was intrusted with enormous arbitrary power. His despotic dictum fixed the amount to be paid by each inhabitant, and a train of armed men and bailiffs followed him to enforce his decrees. Knowing that the government was pitiless and would seize his property and his person if he failed to collect the full amount of taxes due from the village, the collector was pitiless himself. With relentless callousness he drove starving families from their homes and sold their property at auction, though often the costs of the sale were higher than the receipts. In his heart the sentiment of justice, which would prompt to an equitable distribution of the taxes among the inhabitants, was stifled by the desire to spare his relatives and friends, by hatred and the desire of vengeance upon his enemies, by the fear of displeasing those who gave him work. Being responsible for the whole amount, he imposed higher sums than justice would permit upon prompt and honest payers, to indemnify himself for the sums he failed to collect from the dishonest and the destitute. Those who paid promptly, finding that by so doing they made it likely that their taxes would be increased next year, ceased to do so, and withheld payment as long as possible. To escape this violent and arbitrary taxation, the French peasant of the 18th century acted like the mediæval Jew. He took care to avoid all appearance of prosperity, even though he chanced to be prosperous in fact. Under this wretched system each tax-payer

had a direct and permanent interest to act the spy upon his neighbors, and to keep the collector informed of any increase in their wealth. Hence, even if a peasant were prosperous, it was of little avail; for he feared to make use of his money. Even if able to buy improved implements and better horses, he continued to employ half-starved Rosinantes and wooden plows. For, "if I earned more," said a peasant, "the tax-collector would get it." He was afraid to eat good food or to wear good clothes. When Choiseul-Gouffier offered to put tiles upon the roofs of his peasants' huts instead of thatch, they declined with thanks, for fear that their taxes would be immediately increased. Distrustful, rancorous, torpid, and degraded, the French peasants of the Old Régime resembled the Egyptian fellahs or the down-trodden wretches who toil for the rajahs of Hindustan.

CHAPTER XVI.

INDIRECT TAXES.

BUT the picture of misery is not yet complete. The taxes we have thus far discussed were only the direct ones. It remains to discuss those that were indirect. Ordinarily, indirect taxes are much less severely felt than direct. A man who buys a cigar scarcely thinks of the tax connected with it. And even if he does, and objects to it, he at least has the option of doing without the cigar. But he has no legal option as to whether he will pay a direct tax of the government. He sees the latter more plainly and feels it more acutely. In Old France, however, the system of collecting the so-called indirect taxes was so abominable that all the hateful characteristics of direct taxes were attached to them. As with the ancient Romans, they were farmed out by the government for a fixed sum to contractors, who then ground everything possible out of the people. In accordance with the *gabelle*, or salt-tax, every person above seven years of age was compelled to buy from the government, which had a monopoly of the salt trade, seven pounds of salt a year—at a price (in twelve of the provinces) of thirteen sous a pound, or four times as much, and if we take account of the greater value of money at

that time than now, eight times as much as at present. Reckoning four such persons to a family, each family had to pay more than eighteen francs a year for salt, or the wages of about nineteen days' labor. "In Normandy," said the parliament of Rouen in 1760, "unhappy wretches who have no bread are daily seized, prosecuted, and their property sold for not buying salt." The *vexations* connected with this salt-tax were still worse than those connected with the *taille*. To enforce the purchases, an official inquisition was necessary, and the meddling hand of government intruded continually into every man's household. For the seven pounds could only be used for cooking or on the table. Woe to the peasant who by economy saved enough of this salt to cure the flesh of his hog. The government required that he should buy an extra amount of salt for all such purposes; and if he was detected in violation of this wise law, his hog was confiscated and he was fined three hundred francs. Moreover, he was forbidden to use for cooking or on the table any other salt than the seven pounds. We read of two sisters who lived a mile from a town where the government salt warehouse was open only on Saturdays, and who, being out of salt early in the week, boiled down some brine and thus procured a few ounces of salt. For this they were fined forty-eight francs, and would have been fined more but for influential friends. It was forbidden to get water from the sea and from salt springs on penalty of from twenty to forty francs' fine. It was also forbidden to drive cattle to the marshes or other places

where there was salt, or to let them drink sea-water, on penalty of confiscation and a fine of three hundred francs. Nor was it permitted to use more than a pound and a half of salt to a barrel of mackerel. There was actually an ordinance to destroy every year the natural salt formed in certain districts of Provence; and the judges were forbidden under heavy penalties to reduce the fines for violation of the laws concerning salt. There were hundreds of other prohibitions and ordinances, but these are enough to show how the government thrust its vexatious hands into everything connected with salt. Meddling officials came to taste the salt upon men's tables; and, if it was good, declared it to have been smuggled in, because the monopoly-salt of the government was usually damaged and mixed with rubbish.

Then, there were the *aides*—taxes on wine and other articles; and here, too, the footsteps of the peasant were dogged by the rapacious tax-farmer. If a charitable citizen gave a bottle of wine to a poor invalid, he ran the risk of prosecution and excessive fines. At any hour the officials could come to the house of the wine-grower to take an inventory of his wine, to dictate to him how much he could drink, and to tax the rest. In a vineyard near Épernay four barrels of wine worth 600 francs were first taxed 30 francs, and then 75 more when they were sold. Of course the people employed all manner of ruses and tricks to evade these impositions; but the officials were suspicious and on the alert to pounce unawares upon every suspected house.

They multiplied their visits and kept registers so exact that they could judge at a glance of the state of a man's cellar. The wine-grower having paid his 30 and then his 75 francs, it became the turn of the wine-merchant, who had to pay 75 more upon shipping the wine to the retailer. The wine starts on its journey, the tax-farmers prescribing the route. If it swerves from the route, it is confiscated; and if it keeps on the route, additional payments must be made at every step. A boat-load of wine from Languedoc, Dauphiné, or Roussillon which ascended the Rhone and descended the Loire, to go to Paris by the canal de Briare, paid on the route, without counting the payments on the Rhone, thirty-five or forty different kinds of taxes in addition to the tariff levied at the gates of Paris, which was forty-seven francs a hogshead. The taxes on the route were paid at fifteen or sixteen different places—thus necessitating a voyage of twelve or fifteen days more than if all had been paid at once. The water-ways, especially, were lined with these stopping-places. For example, there were twenty-five or thirty tolls between Pontarlier and Lyon, and still more between Lyon and Aigues-Mortes. And when the wine had at length reached the cellar of the retailer, still other and heavy taxes had to be paid.

Among all peasant cultivators the wine-grower was the most to be pitied; and, according to Arthur Young, wine-grower and miserable being were synonymous terms. In the province of Champagne it happened more than once that the inhabitants of La Ferté threw their wine into the river rather than

pay the exorbitant taxes ; and the provincial assembly declared that in the greater part of the province the smallest increase of the taxes would drive all the cultivators to desert their lands.

Such were the extortions and countless vexations connected with the wine-industry of the Old Régime. And, as for the *gabelle*, or salt-tax, we have the confession of a minister of finance, Calonne, that it was the cause every year of 4,000 attachments on houses, 3,400 imprisonments, 500 condemnations to the whipping-post, to banishment, or to the galleys. Never were two taxes more artfully devised, not merely for the robbery, but for the irritation of the people, than these two on salt and wine.

The taxes, then, were the chief cause of the misery of the lower classes in France ; and the taxes weighed so heavily on these classes, because of the exemptions of the very classes most able to bear them. Not merely the nobles and the clergy but many of the richer *bourgeois*, were enabled to shift the brunt of the burden upon the feeble shoulders of the poor. The peasants, on the whole, were more wretched than the laborers of the towns ; but these, too, suffered incalculable misery. Seven times in the course of eighty years the kings robbed the towns of the right to elect their local officers, and resold it to them for money. To raise the enormous sums with which to pay for this vain semblance of municipal freedom, the towns were compelled to double the taxes on articles entering their gates ; and as the heaviest of these tariffs were on the necessities of life, the artisan and the day-laborer

were burdened far more than the rich oligarchy who held the offices in their hands.

To sum up the misery of the people, Taine puts the following words into the mouth of an imaginary peasant—a type of the real one: “I am miserable because I am taxed too heavily. The burden of taxation is too heavy upon me, because the privileged classes are exempt from carrying their share of it. And not only do they force me to bear their share of the burden, but they levy upon me their ecclesiastical and feudal taxes. When I have given fifty-three per cent. of my net income to the royal tax-collector, I must give, in addition, more than fourteen per cent. to the feudal lord, and also more than fourteen per cent. to the clergy. With the eighteen or nineteen that are left me, I must satisfy the rapacity of the salt and wine tax collectors. I alone, poor wretch, pay the expenses of two governments; the one, ancient and local, which to-day is absent, useless, harassing, and humiliating, and acts only through its vexations, its injustice, and its extortion; the other, recent, central and omnipresent, which, arrogating to itself the performance of all possible functions, has need of enormous pecuniary resources, and falls upon my emaciated shoulders with the whole of its stupendous weight.”

CHAPTER XVII.

FORCED LABOR AND MILITARY SERVICE.

AN admirable summary, as far as it goes. But still other points remain to be discussed before the hideous picture of woe is complete.

The *corvée* has been mentioned more than once, but only in an incidental way. Originally, in the Middle Ages, it was only a local, feudal institution; but with the triumph of the Crown over the aristocracy came the extension of the system to public works. At the end of Louis XIV.'s reign the government began to have the public highways repaired by the *corvée* alone; that is to say, by the peasants alone, who, in addition to their other ills, were thus compelled to neglect their fields in order to build splendid high-roads for the equipages of the rich. In 1737 the system was applied to all France. From that time on, we see it extended to more and more roads, until in 1779 we read that the public works executed by the *corvée* in the poor province of Berry alone were valued at 700,000 francs a year, which was also the estimate in 1787 for Lower Normandy. Arthur Young, who travelled through France in all directions on the eve of the Revolution, was constantly amazed at the useless magnifi-

cence of the roads and the absurdly small amount of travel upon them. From the correspondence of the intendants we learn that it was the custom to refuse to allow the peasants to employ the royal *corvée* upon their own local roads, because their labor ought to be reserved for the high-roads, or—to use the phrase of the time—the roads of the King.

Moreover, the royal *corvée* was used not only on the roads, but was gradually extended to all public works. In 1719 an ordinance decreed that it should be used in building barracks for the soldiers; and stipulated that the villages should send their best laborers for this purpose, and that all other work should yield precedence to this. By the *corvée*, too, the peasants were compelled to transport the criminals to the prisons and galleys and the beggars to the alms-houses. Their horses and wagons were also obliged to transport the military baggage when the troops changed their camp. And, for all this, the peasants received but a wretched pittance, the amount of which was fixed arbitrarily by the government.

Perhaps the greatest burden of all which the peasant had to bear, says de Tocqueville, was the military service. The causes which were dissolving the nation into hostile groups and individuals were dissolving the army also. For there, too, the privileges were for the few and the hardships for the many. Of the 90,000,000 francs spent annually upon the army, 46,000,000 went to the small body of officers, and only 44,000,000 to the great body of the soldiers. These officers were nearly all nobles;

and the laws for the exclusion of plebeians became more and more stringent, until it was decreed, a decade* before the Revolution, that no one could hold the rank of captain unless his family had been noble for at least four generations.

Thus, on the one hand, the few possessed the authority, the honor, the money, the leisure, the good cheer, and the social pleasures; on the other hand, the great body of the men had to endure the subordination, the abjection, the fatigue, the enforced enrolment, with no hope of promotion, with six sous a day and bread fit only for a dog. On the one hand the upper nobility, on the other the dregs of the populace. The knowledge of the latter that they alone had to bear the burdens of the service, while the nobles feasted and danced, rendered all the more bitter the ignominy of being flogged like hounds, the pangs of hunger, and the hardships of every kind. Exempt from enforced service were not merely the nobles and the *bourgeois*, but also various employees of the government, all the game-keepers, the foresters, the domestics and valets of ecclesiastics, of religious houses, of nobles, and even of *bourgeois* who "lived nobly"; in short, every one who had influential friends and protectors.

Hence there was no middle class in the army. The nobles and the lowest of the populace were separated by a gulf, over which there was no intervening bridge; and the popular hatred of the service was so great that many fled to the forests to escape it, and were hunted down like wild beasts. In a

* Mme. Campan, pp 235-236.

single district where, *during* the Revolution, there were from fifty to a hundred volunteers in a day, men cut off their own thumbs, *before* the Revolution, to avoid enlistment in the army. D'Argenson mentions, in 1752, that since the peace of 1748 there had been 30,000 deserters; and Voltaire mentions how shocked he was at learning that the number of deserters in eight years reached 60,000. But when the crisis came, when the King and the nobles and the priests expected this army to protect them and uphold them in their privileges—this army which was composed of despised, maltreated, and imbruted peasants, of jail-birds and adventurers, of the riff-raff of the great cities, and of all that was most wretched and desperate in the populace—they found that they had reckoned without their host. In 1788, before the insurrection in Dauphiné, the Marshal de Vaux reported to the government that no reliance could be placed upon the troops. And he was right. After the storm of the Bastille, troops of women* filled the streets and cried to the artillery soldiers: "Why these cannon? Will you kill your mothers, your wives, and your children?" "Fear nothing," replied the men, "sooner than against you, these guns shall be levelled against the palace of the tyrant."

* Campan, vol. ii. p. 52.

CHAPTER XVIII.

POACHERS, SMUGGLERS, BEGGARS, BRIGANDS.

WHEN we reflect upon all the causes of misery that existed in pre-revolutionary France, should we not expect that many of these half-starved, despised and down-trodden wretches would have been driven by hunger and want to beggary and high-way robbery? Our expectation would prove to be just. Bands of scurvy, mangy, hungry and ferocious vagrants, beggars, smugglers, poachers, brigands, swarmed like vermin through the country. As early as 1752, there were bands of fifty or sixty poachers each in the environs of Paris, all armed to the teeth and thoroughly organized, with infantry in the centre and cavalry on the flanks. And they were all the more dangerous and desperate because they knew that the laws against poaching were terrible and relentless. When Attorney-General Terray was hunting in 1777 on his estate in Bourgogne with two officers, seven poachers fired upon the game before their eyes, and then upon them. Terray was wounded, and a ball passed through the coat of one of his companions. The mounted police arrived, but were repulsed by the poachers, who were only overcome by dragoons

from Provins. And who can blame these desperate men? In killing their oppressors, were they not avengers of the wrongs of the peasants whose crops were devoured by the game, and who themselves were often shot down by the keepers?

When a tax is excessive, a temptation to defraud the government arises; and this was the case with the exorbitant *gabelle*, which produced thousands of smugglers and makers of contraband salt. We may judge of their number from the fact that 1,200 leagues of inter-provincial custom-house lines were guarded by 50,000 men, of whom 23,000 were non-uniformed soldiers. In the so-called provinces of *grande gabelle*, agriculture ceased in a belt of country four miles wide on each side of the lines; and the inhabitants consisted of but two classes—customs officials and smugglers. The higher the tax, the greater the premium on the violation of the law; and along the border line that separated Brittany from Normandy, Maine, and Anjou, an increase of four sous a pound to the *gabelle* was sufficient to create an almost incredible accession to the number of smugglers and contraband salt-manufacturers. Brittany being a province of lower taxes than the neighboring ones, its whole border was inhabited by desperate vagabonds and famished outlaws from other parts of the country, whose sole occupation was to collect salt and smuggle it into the adjoining provinces by stealth or by force. And so it was in various parts of the country, at ports, on the borders of provinces, and on the borders of the kingdom.

But the gravest symptom of all was that the masses of the people sided with the smugglers against the officials. Daring chieftains of brigands and assassins were the idols of the people. Such was Mandrin; who, at the head of a band of sixty, traversed, for more than a year, with contraband articles, the provinces of Franche-Comté, Lyonnais, Bourbonnais, Auvergne, and Bourgogne; levied contributions on officials, and sold his merchandise in twenty-seven towns, which he entered unresisted. To conquer him, it was necessary to form a camp of 2,000 men before Valence; and even then he was taken only by treason among his followers. To this day there are families that boast of being his descendants, and revere him as a liberator of the people.

Such occurrences were infallible signs of the rottenness and approaching dissolution of the old social system in France. Mercier estimated that there were more than 10,000 highwaymen in the country, against whom the mounted police of nearly 4,000 men were continually on the march. "Every day," said the provincial assembly of Upper Guyenne, "there are complaints of the ineffective police-force of the rural districts." The absentee lords allowed things to go as they would, and their lands became the refuge of the outlaws of the neighborhood. Thus a danger grew out of every abuse, from the negligent laxity of the feudal lords, as well as from the excessive severity of the royal officials. All the institutions of the Old Régime seemed to multiply outlaws and desperate men. Honest laborers,

ground down beneath the heel of the tax-collector, and despairing of living by work, became beggars and dangerous drones, or even robbers and assassins. In 1764 the government issued decrees, the stringency of which was a sign of the excess of the evil. It was decreed that all those should be regarded as vagabonds and vagrants, and punished as such, who for six months had exercised no profession or trade, and who were without visible means of support, and unable to prove their good character by creditable witnesses. That not merely the vagabonds who tramped through the country should be arrested, but also all beggars who could be even suspected of vagrancy. The penalty was to be three years in the galleys; nine years for the second offence; and, for the third, the galleys for life. This was for able-bodied men. For feebler persons, imprisonment was substituted for the slavery of the galleys. In accordance with this law, more than 50,000 beggars were arrested at one time, and as the ordinary prisons were not capable of containing them, new ones had to be built. Beggars continued to be arrested from that time until the Revolution; and their maintenance cost the government a million a year, in spite of the vileness of the food they received. By an ordinance of 1778, the government police were to arrest, not merely the mendicants whom they chanced to see themselves, but every one who was denounced to them as such, or as a suspicious person. The most respectable citizen was thus at the mercy of his enemies if they accused him to the police, who could throw him into prison with thieves and vaga-

bonds without a trial. And this was not merely possible in theory, but actual in fact. For we learn from the intendant of Rennes that he saw in the jail of that town several husbands who had been arrested merely at the request of their wives, and as many wives at the request of their husbands. Children were imprisoned on the accusations of their step-mothers, and servant-girls on that of their masters—all without the slightest proof of beggary. "There occurred," he says, "not a single judicial decision which gave back liberty to any of the infinite number of those who had been unjustly arrested." It frequently happened that men were arrested at a distance from the prison or the galley to which they were destined, and that three or four months elapsed, during which they were confined in various prisons on the way. Men and women were huddled together in these prisons, which were filthy hot-beds of vice and disease.

And yet, in spite of all its rigor, the law failed to attain its object. "Our towns," said the parliament of Brittany in 1783, "are so peopled with beggars that all projects for stopping mendicancy seem only to have increased it." "The highways," wrote an intendant, "are infested with dangerous vagabonds, tramps, and beggars." The make-shift method of arresting beggars was of no avail when the deeper causes of beggary remained untouched. Out of 1,500 inhabitants of Saint-Patrice, 400 lived on alms; as was the case with three-fourths of the 500 people of Saint-Laurent. These are but two instances by way of example; and they could be multiplied. In

1787 there were 30,000 laborers in Lyons who lived on charity ; and at Paris, which then contained only 650,000 inhabitants, there were nearly 120,000 indigent people in 1791. Under such circumstances what could be done by petty police regulations? It was vain to expect all these men to submit to a death by hunger and cold. During the bitter winter of 1788 the forests around Rouen were pillaged in broad daylight, while the entire forest of Bagnères was felled—the wood being publicly sold by the marauders. And when the riots of the Revolution came, the leaders who headed the infuriate peasants were frequently robbers, galley-slaves, and assassins. When a certain house in Paris was sacked, it was noticed that, among the forty rioters that were arrested, there was scarcely a single one who had not been previously in the hands of “justice,” who had not been branded or flogged. In all revolutions the dregs of society rise to the top. Unseen in ordinary times, desperate characters issue, in a stormy period, from their garrets and cellars, like rats from their holes in a sinking ship.

CHAPTER XIX.

EXTREME CENTRALIZATION.

WE have now surveyed the rights and the wrongs of the various classes of French society ; and although, in doing so, we have necessarily caught more than one glimpse of the central government, it will be well to examine more closely its nature and workings.

In France the protective spirit—that is, the spirit which leads the many to admire and look up to the few for protection and leadership, and the few to look upon themselves as the natural leaders and protectors of the many—has always been very strong. And although it is a disputed question as to whether its strength in France is due to the inborn nature of the French or to special causes that have arisen in the course of French history, the fact of its strength remains undisputed. Whatever its origin, it is this spirit that produced the veneration and loyalty which the French people have felt by turns for their priests, their nobles, and their kings. It was this spirit to which was due the profound difference between the French rebellion known as the “Fronde,” against absolute monarchy, and the simultaneous rebellion in England which led to the death of

Charles I. In France, the people, being without the sturdy self-reliance of the English, and unable to shake off their admiration for titled lords, sought their leaders in high-born princes and dukes and marquises and counts, while the leaders of the democratic English rebellion were brewers and tinkers and tailors and draymen and cobblers. The latter succeeded, while the former failed. Charles I. was beheaded, and James II. dethroned; but the triumph of Mazarin over the Fronde consolidated the absolute despotism of Louis XIV. Thus, the nobles having lost their political power through the successive blows of Richelieu and Mazarin, abandoned the attempt to recover it; and thronged, as we have seen, to Versailles, to dispute with each other the honor of handing the King his shirt and his slippers, and of receiving in return the fat sinecures of the Court. The people, being thus deserted by their natural leaders, began more and more to hate the nobles and their detestable privileges, and to transfer their allegiance to the Crown. And so complete was this allegiance that, for a large portion of the reign of Louis XIV., that illustrious despot, in spite of all his tyranny, was far more loved than hated. At his death, as already mentioned, the people were almost crazed with joy; but no one at that time even thought of attacking the institution of monarchy itself. The fearful disasters into which Louis had plunged the country made the people hate him, at length, as an individual; but the throne itself was still unshaken—at least to all outward appearance. Even at a much later time, when

the first son of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette was born, the delight of the people was so great that they congratulated each other upon the street without being acquainted, while acquaintances embraced each other for joy. And, indeed, when the States-General opened in 1789, the vast majority of the people, though hating absolutism, still loved the King and were loyal to the Crown; only a comparatively small number being radical enough to desire to abolish the name of King. Shrewd observers, like Arthur Young, perceived, it is true, that the whole drift of affairs was in the direction of a republic; but, although the very foundations of absolute monarchy were long since undermined, the people still clung to the word, and loved the shell when the kernel was gone.

This love of the people for the King had concentrated the judicial, executive, and legislative functions of the government in the hands of the monarch. The supreme power was wielded, in the name of the King, by the cabinet ministers—the most important of whom was the *contrôleur-général*; or, as we should say, the Secretary of the Treasury, except that his power was far greater, and included, in fact, the functions of our Secretary of the Interior. He, and the other members of the cabinet, were usually *roturiers*, and lacked the pomp and splendor of the nobles. But, though their pretensions were smaller, their political power was all the greater, on account of the very secrecy and silence of their procedure. All internal affairs were under the management of the *contrôleur-général*. His imme-

diat subordinates were the *intendants* of the provinces, who, in turn, had under them the *subdélégués* in the various provincial districts. The *intendants* were generally recently ennobled *parvenus*, but the *subdélégués* were always *roturiers*.

The Scotchman Law once said to the Marquis d'Argenson: "Never should I have believed on hearsay what I saw myself when *contrôleur-général* of finance. Know that this kingdom of France is governed by thirty *intendants*. You have neither parliament [like the English], nor estates, nor provincial governors [except in name]; but upon thirty clerks depends the weal or woe, the abundance or sterility of this country." The pomp and pageantry of the great nobles who held the titles of provincial governors was nothing but show—as far as any real political power was concerned. For this was in the hands of the *intendants*, whom the nobles heartily despised. Each year the *contrôleur-général* and the cabinet fixed in secret the amount of taxes to be collected in each province; the *intendant* fixed the amount to be paid by each parish, and enforced the payments of the collectors. In regard to the military, also, the cabinet and the King were supreme. The cabinet fixed arbitrarily the number of soldiers to be contributed by each province; the *intendant* declared how many were to be levied in each parish; and the *subdélégué* presided over the drawing of lots, decided who was exempt, designated the soldiers who were permitted to live at their houses, and those who were to be transferred to other places, and finally handed them over to the military authorities.

There was no appeal from his decision except to the intendant, and from him to the cabinet. So, too, with the public works. Except in the few provinces with local legislatures, like that of Languedoc, all public works, even those of entirely local character, were planned and executed by agents of the central government. Even the maintenance of order in the country districts was in the hands of the central power. The *maréchaussée*, or government police, was scattered all over the kingdom, and was everywhere under the orders of the intendants. By the aid of this police, in the absence of regular troops, the intendants arrested vagabonds, tried to repress mendicancy, and put down the riots so frequently occasioned by the high price of grain. Never, except in the cities, were the people called upon to relieve the government of this part of its task; and even there, the intendant chose the men and appointed the officers of the town guard. The police regulations of the various judicial bodies (*corps de justice*) were usually applicable only to one place, and could even there be annulled by cabinet edicts, the number of which was immense.

Moreover, the central government not merely diminished the feeling of sturdy independence among the people by making futile attempts to aid the poor in times of famine, but it actually pretended, with all the arrogance of officialism, to teach them the art of enriching themselves, and even to force them to use particular ways of attaining this end. Numberless edicts compelled the artisans to employ certain methods of manufacturing certain

articles; and, it being impossible for the intendants to enforce the application of all these rules, general inspectors of industry were appointed to traverse the provinces and look after the execution of the decrees of the would-be omniscient cabinet. And the omniscience of these politicians went so far that they issued edicts prohibiting the cultivation of certain plants in those soils which, according to their infinite wisdom, were unsuited therefor. Vines already planted were actually pulled up by order of the central government.

In 1692 municipal elections were for the first time generally abolished. The municipal functions were then made government offices and sold by the King. Louis XIV., indeed, alternately deprived the towns of municipal freedom and sold it back to them at his pleasure. The intendant, together with the oligarchical clique which comprised the town-council and the general assembly of the "notables," ruled the town; while the people, seeing through the thin semblance of liberty, lost all interest in municipal affairs. These affairs were all under the control of the royal cabinet. The French towns could neither establish a local tax, nor levy a contribution, nor mortgage, nor sell, nor rent, nor administer their property, nor spend their surplus revenue, without the sanction of a special cabinet-edict issued upon the report of the intendant. The latter was consulted upon everything; and upon everything he had a decided opinion, which he was ever ready to enforce. He regulated even the popular festivals, and ordered, upon occasion, public manifestations

of joy, such as bonfires and the illumination of houses. Even the conscience of the people did not fail to receive his paternal care; and de Tocqueville mentions an intendant who fined several members of a town-guard twenty francs apiece for absenting themselves from the *Te Deum*. The utter subjection of the people to the intendant's will may be seen from the fact that the municipal officials cringingly called him *Monseigneur* and *Votre Grandeur*. Nor did centralization benefit the towns pecuniarily; for we have already seen how utter was their financial ruin.

In the villages, above all, the weight of the central government's arm was felt with fearful force. According to de Tocqueville, their constitutions in the Middle Ages had been somewhat democratic, and similar to those of the New England townships. Then they had possessed certain rights with which the *seigneur* did not interfere; but in the eighteenth century these seemingly democratic assemblies were but an empty form. The tax-collector, who was under the immediate orders of the intendant, and the syndic, under those of the intendant's *subdélégué*, were the despotic rulers of the village. Nearly all the more prosperous and enlightened among the inhabitants were driven to the towns, as we have seen, until no one remained in the village but a herd of grossly ignorant and stupid peasants. "A village," said Turgot, "is an assemblage of cabins and of inhabitants no less passive than they."

Centralization in France, as de Tocqueville has shown, was the creation of neither the Revolution

nor the Empire, but of the Old Régime." "Under the Old Régime," he says, "as in our time, there was neither city, town, village, nor hamlet in France, neither hospital, factory, convent, nor college which was allowed to have an independent will in its own private affairs, or to administer its own property as it wished. Then, as now, the administration held all the French in tutelage; and if the insolence of the word had not then been produced, the thing itself, at least, was there." Even in Languedoc the smallest hamlet, hidden away in the valleys of the Cevennes, had no power to make the most minute expenditure without a special permit of the royal cabinet.

The judicial tribunals of France were somewhat independent of the King; but he escaped from their jurisdiction, whenever he wished to, by a process called "evocation." That is, he evoked, or took away, any lawsuit he pleased from the ordinary courts, and referred it to a special tribunal appointed by himself for the occasion. The reason given once by a party desiring an evocation is worthy of note. "An ordinary judge," said he, "is bound by fixed rules, which oblige him to suppress a fact contrary to the law; but the cabinet can always dispense with the rules for a good purpose." Procedure such as this opened the doors, of course, to a despotism fatal to justice. Two instances will show its nature. An overseer of roads and bridges, charged with the direction of the *corvée*, was prosecuted by a peasant for maltreatment. The cabinet evoked the case, for the reason that the chief-engineer said as follows in

a letter to the intendant: "To tell the truth, the overseer is very much to blame; but that is no reason for allowing the affair to take its course in the ordinary courts; for it is of the greatest importance for the administration of roads and bridges that the usual tribunals should not receive the complaints of the peasants against the overseers of public works. If this example were followed, these works would be interrupted by continual trials, stirred up by the public animosity against the officials." The second instance I will mention is this. In the case of a government contractor, who had arbitrarily taken the materials which he needed from the field of a private person, the intendant reported as follows to the *contrôleur-général*: "It is impossible for me to explain to you with sufficient emphasis how injurious it would be to the interests of the administration to abandon its contractors to the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts, whose principles can never be reconciled with its own."

We see, then, that in the France of the Old Régime, the people existed for the sake of the government, not the government for the sake of the people. Centralization had palsied the independence of the individual, and supplanted the old feudal legislation and judicial institutions without absolutely destroying their outward form. The system was best seen in Canada, where feudalism had left scarcely a trace. There could be seen the unmixed centralization. But in the mother country, at the moment when the Revolution burst forth, almost nothing of the old administrative edifice of feudalism was destroyed;

though a new and more modern structure had been built, so to speak, underneath the foundations of the old one. The building of this took place, of course, very gradually, and without any profoundly meditated plan; but it prepared none the less the final downfall of feudalism and the supremacy of the central power. In times of famine and distress this central power allowed, for a moment, the parliaments to administer the government to a certain extent, and permitted them sometimes to make a noise which has left its echo in history. But soon it silently took its place once more, and laid its heavy hand again upon all men and all affairs of the country. Close attention to the conflict between the so-called parliaments and the royal power will recall the fact that the battle was almost always fought for supremacy in matters of policy, and not of administration. The quarrels were often concerning new taxes; that is to say, the two antagonists, the executive and the judiciary departments, disputed the possession of the legislative function of government; and the nearer the Revolution approached, the more the conflict assumed this character. But until the Revolution actually came, and the National Assembly stepped in between the combatants and seized the prize, the Crown was the victor over the judiciary in both judicial and political questions. We have seen how the plan of evocation enabled the King to thwart justice and pervert it to his own ends. But he possessed an even more summary method of disposing of his enemies, and of conferring favors upon his noble and priestly friends; for the so-called *lettres*

de cachet enabled him to dispense with even the mockery of a trial before a packed court. These were arbitrary warrants of imprisonment or execution, issued by the King, when and against whom he chose. Many of the most illustrious Frenchmen were cast into prison by this terrible agency. Mirabeau, for example, was hurled into the dungeon of Vincennes by his irascible father, in accordance with such a *lettre de cachet* procured from the King. The danger of being suddenly imprisoned by some enemy, with influence at Court, hung like the sword of Damocles over every man's head. The following is an instance of the lengths to which despotism could go, at that time, in one of the most civilized countries in the world. Maurice de Saxe, a brilliant general and licentious libertine, fell in love with an actress named Chantilly, who chose, however, to marry Favart, a writer of songs and comic operas, rather than be the paramour of the nobleman. Maurice, who was unaccustomed to repulses of this kind, was astonished at her presumption, and applied to the King for a *lettre de cachet*. This mere application, as Buckle justly remarks, is sufficiently amazing; but the result was worthy of an oriental despotism alone. Incredible as it may seem, the government of France committed the base atrocity of issuing a warrant by which the wife of Favart was torn from her husband and compelled to submit to the embraces of the infamous Maurice. The bare recital of such things as this, even at our distant day, is enough to cause men's blood to boil. What wonder, then, that, at last, the very names

of noble and King became hateful to the French! What wonder that the people, maddened by the wrongs and insults heaped upon them, leaped, at last, like tigers, upon their oppressors, and deluged the land with their blood! What wonder that the good-natured fool, Louis XVI., had to pay upon the scaffold the penalty of the despotic crimes of his predecessors! Those who bemoan with sentimental tears the fate of Marie Antoinette should remember the fate of the wife of Favart; and those who are ever so ready to charge the great French people with fickleness and blood-thirsty cruelty should remember the insufferable wrongs which they so long had to endure, and should wonder, not so much at the terrible violence of the Revolution, as at the unparalleled patience by which it was so long delayed.

Before leaving the subject of the absolute power of the central government it would be well to take a glance at Paris, the overshadowing importance of which was a symptom, a result, and a cause of centralization. In no other modern country had the capital obtained so enormous an influence as in France. Like ancient Rome, Paris almost deserved to give its name to the country. "France," said Montesquieu, "is Paris, together with that part of the country which Paris has swallowed up." At the time of the Fronde, says de Tocqueville, Paris was merely the largest city in France. In 1789 it was France itself. Local liberty had all but disappeared; the symptoms of an independent life in the provinces had almost ceased, and their characteristic features had become confused. Europe was amazed

during the Revolution to see the French abolish the old historic names of their provinces, and cut up the country into so-called departments, with new boundary lines. It is the first time, said Burke, that men have been seen to mutilate their country in so barbarous a manner. And, indeed, what Englishman would dream of abolishing Yorkshire, and Kent, and Northumberland, not to speak of Wales and Scotland, and of dividing the country up into new and artificial departments? Or what American would consider for a moment a proposition to wipe out entirely the names and boundaries of Massachusetts and Virginia, and the rest of the States? In Virginia, even such names of counties as King William and Princess Anne were retained, although the Virginians fought against the English Crown and established a republic. For, in America and England, the states and shires are not mere fractions of the whole, but political organisms with a life of their own. In France, on the contrary, this life had been so crushed by the baleful influence of extreme centralization that the dismemberment, so deplored by Burke, of Normandy, and Provence, and Burgundy and the rest, was merely the dissection of corpses, and not the mutilation of living beings. Arthur Young was struck with wonder at the dull and listless appearance of the provincial towns, while Paris was thrilling with life. That city, though then containing but 650,000 inhabitants, was not merely the political centre of France, but the intellectual centre of Europe. The people in the lesser towns seemed scarcely to have opinions of their own, but looked to

the centre for everything. Arthur Young was in Nancy * when the ominous news arrived that the King had dismissed Necker from the ministry and ordered him to quit the country. The people of Nancy were considerably excited at the news; but upon asking different persons what they intended to do, Young always received the reply: "We are only a provincial town, and must wait to see what they will do in Paris." Moreover, Paris was not merely the political and intellectual centre of the country, not merely a city of commercial exchange, of consumption and pleasure, but had also become a city of manufactures—an ominous fact; for with the factories came an increased number of laborers—that is, of the poor and desperate class. In the sixty years that preceded the Revolution the population of the city, as a whole, increased by hardly a third, while the number of laborers more than doubled. Thus, Paris had become the mistress of France; and the army of *sans-culottes* was rapidly assembling that were destined to make themselves masters of Paris.

The fatal effects of centralization, we see, were manifold. Law-making being subject to the momentary and arbitrary caprice of the King and Cabinet, the laws were changed so incessantly that at length all law † necessarily fell into contempt. And when this condition of things could be borne no longer, the people arose, punished their law-givers,

* Young, pp. 404-405.

† De Tocqueville, pp. 102-103.

and took the law into their own hands. So long as Paris was on the side of the government, its preponderating influence was of immense advantage to the King; but when the metropolis threw its vast weight into the opposite scale, the days of the Old Régime were numbered.

CHAPTER XX.

INTELLECTUAL DECLINE UNDER LOUIS XIV.

ONE part of my task is done. I have endeavored to lay before the reader's eyes at least a partial picture of pre-revolutionary France. I have sketched the privileges of the King, the nobles, the priests, and the richer *bourgeois*, and the misery of the peasants and the populace of the cities. The centralization and consequent tyranny of the government have also been passed in review. It remains to trace the steps by which the nation, which for centuries had shown a more loyal devotion to its monarchs than almost any other in Europe, came to hate the name of King and to adore the word Republic; by which the nation that had always been conspicuous for the gulf between its different social classes came to worship equality; by which the nation that had led the crusades, and always been conspicuous for religious zeal, became a nation of sceptics and atheists; by which, in short, there gradually took place in France an immense intellectual revolution, of which the outburst of 1789 was merely the outward and visible sign.

At the death of Louis XIV., France lay prostrate and exhausted. The people breathed freely once

more at the glad tidings that the old tyrant was dead ; and there followed a sudden reaction against the tyranny and religious hypocrisy of the Court. Grosser spirits sought in license a recompense for the slavery they had endured. But in more elevated natures there arose a longing, first, for liberty of thought, and, later on, for liberty of action. How was that longing to be gratified? What were the means of opposition in France to such tyranny as that which drove more than half a million Huguenots to seek refuge in other lands?

The judicial tribunals called parliaments were organized bodies capable of some resistance; but they contended much less for the liberty of the people than for the selfish interests and privileges of their own class. Moreover, their power of resistance was exceedingly small. They had the right to register, or to protest against, the edicts of the government ; but if the King especially desired the registration he appeared in person before the parliaments, which, in this case, seldom dared to disobey his commands. If they did, he could rid himself of their obstruction by dissolving them, or exiling them to some distant town. In England there was a great legislative body representing the commons as well as the nobility and clergy. There was a tolerably free press, free debates in Parliament, and great public meetings with popular discussion. There was also a Bill of Rights, a Habeas Corpus act, and trial by jury. All these things in England were so many means of organized legal resistance to tyranny, deeply rooted in the traditions of the country.

They were not mere empty forms, but had signally shown their strength in the execution of one King and the dethronement of another. But in France all these things were lacking. The people possessed *no organ* of resistance. All during the eighteenth century, as we know, there were local uprisings and bread-riots of famished and desperate men. But, there being no free institutions around which the people could rally, as in England, these local disturbances were easily crushed by the government.—One means of effective resistance, and one alone, remained to the lovers of freedom in France. That means was literature, with its auxiliary, conversation, in the brilliant *salons* of the time.

But where was a literature to be found in France at the death of Louis XIV., that was suited to the needs of the new generation, growing up in hatred of ecclesiastical tyranny? Where was there *any* literature of value in France at that time? Where were the results of the much eulogized munificence of Louis the so-called Great in “protecting” and “fostering” literature? Who now remembers Campistron, La Chapelle, Ducerceau, Dancourt, Danchet, Catrou, Chaulieu, Vergier, and the rest of the wretched scribblers whose names were then the most illustrious in French letters? The protective spirit, carried by Louis into literature, had produced its natural results. In an age when the belief in the divinity supposed to hedge a King had not yet been dispelled, it was easy for the vain and pompous Louis to persuade the people that he was the supreme arbiter of literary taste. Hence authors

stroke, above all things, to obtain the commendation of the King and his Court; and manliness and originality in literature gave place to cringing servility and flattery. Long before Louis died, all the greatest writers who had grown up and flourished in the preceding generations had passed away. Before the fostering care of the great King had produced the whole of its disastrous effects, France had brought forth, in the mathematics, such men as Pascal, Descartes, Fermat, Gassendi, and Mersenne; in anatomy, as Pecquet and Riolan; in practical medicine, as Fernel and Joubert; in surgery and osteology, as Ambroise Paré; in pathology, as Baillou; in zoology, as Belon and Rondelet; in chemistry, as Rey; in philosophy, as Descartes and Malebranche; in *belles lettres*, as Corneille, Racine, Molière, Boileau, La Fontaine, La Bruyère and La Rochefoucauld; in painting, as Poussin, Lesueur, Claude Lorraine and Le Brun; in sculpture, as Puget; and in architecture, as Perrault and Mansart.

All this was changed before Louis XIV. died. Even art and *belles lettres* had sunk to the lowest ebb; while in science scarcely a single discovery worthy of mention was made during his whole reign. Louis fostered astronomy by building a splendid observatory, but France added nothing to that science during his rule. While just across the channel Sir Isaac Newton produced his immortal *Principia*, and gave to the world the sublime theory of gravitation, the French intellect had become so stupefied by the benumbing influence of centralization and protection that no French astronomer adopted New-

ton's views until 1732; which was forty-five years after their publication. In anatomy and the other branches of scientific and practical medicine France accomplished nothing for two or three generations. The practice of medicine in Paris was notoriously inferior to that in London and the chief cities of Germany and Italy, while in the French provincial towns the grossest ignorance prevailed even among the best physicians. Addison, for example, wrote from Blois in 1699: "I made use of one of the physicians of this place, who are as cheap as our English farriers and generally as ignorant." In zoology and botany, too, nothing was accomplished in France during that fatal reign. In the previous reign, Rey had anticipated some of the great discoveries of Lavoisier in chemistry; but his writings were totally forgotten during the *Great Louis'* reign; and the famous experiments of Boyle were unknown in France for more than forty years after their promulgation in England.

"The truth is," says Buckle, "that in these, as in all matters of real importance, in questions requiring independent thought, and in questions of practical utility, the age of Louis XIV. was an age of decay: it was an age of misery, of intolerance, and oppression; it was an age of bondage, of ignominy, of incompetence." "In that time, as in all others, the misery of the people and the degradation of the country followed the decline of the national intellect; while this last was, in its turn, the result of the protective spirit,—that mischievous spirit which weakens whatever it touches." And "nothing but

the amazing energy of the French people could have enabled them to rally, as they afterwards did, from the effects of so enfeebling a system. But though they rallied, the effort cost them dear. The struggle," as we know, "lasted two generations, and was only ended by that frightful Revolution which formed its natural climax." The tinsel splendor of the Court of Louis XIV. was all that the French possessed to recompense them for their torpidity of mind and servility of spirit. "There was no popular liberty ; there were no great men ; there was no science ; there was no literature ; there were no arts."

CHAPTER XXI.

INFLUENCE OF ENGLAND UPON FRANCE.

AND when the tyrant died and the reaction came, where were the rising generation in France to find the intellectual aliment which they craved? Where but in the country of Newton and of Locke? Buckle has given, in his twelfth chapter, the results of his profound investigation of that junction of the French and English intellects which he declares to be "by far the most important fact in the history of the eighteenth century." During the earlier parts of Louis XIV.'s reign, when his wars were successful and he threatened to overwhelm the rest of Europe, the French, puffed up with vanity, and adoring themselves in the person of their gaudy monarch, looked down with scorn upon the English—a people so barbarous as to kill one king and depose another. In his life of Cromwell, Carlyle quotes Saumaise as declaring the English to be "more savage than their own mastiffs." Another French writer called them "rebel barbarians." Patin compared them to the Turks, and said that they would probably hang their next king. Madame de Maintenon spoke of the "ferocity of the English," and declared that she hated them as much as

she did the common people. The dislike and contempt felt by the French for the English were, indeed, so absurdly extreme, that an attempt was made in 1679 to discredit bark as a medicine because it was an "English remedy"; and at the end of the seventeenth century Parisians argued against the introduction of coffee as a beverage because the English liked it. So far from the laws, customs, and literature of England having any influence upon the French, it was the English who, in the field of poetry at least, imitated the French in the time of Pope, Dryden and the other writers of the so-called Augustan age. At the close of the seventeenth century it is doubtful if the English language was known to even half a dozen Frenchmen in either literature or science. When the English poet Prior arrived as ambassador at the French court, no one in Paris was aware that he had written poetry; and Boileau was even ignorant, until informed by Addison, that the English had any good poets. It is actually said that Milton's "Paradise Lost" was not even heard of in France for fifty years after its appearance. Ignorance begets prejudice; and the French, being totally ignorant concerning their insular neighbors, regarded them as a mere horde of turbulent savages, entirely unworthy the attention of so polished and civilized a people as themselves.

But the bitter defeats that the French suffered at the hands of Marlborough and Prince Eugene aroused a suspicion in their minds that perhaps, after all, other nations besides themselves possessed

some merit ; and the frightful tyranny of Louis XIV. made them also suspect, at length, that possibly despotism has its drawbacks, and that a government by princes and bishops is not the best possible for a civilized country. Between the death of Louis in 1715 and the outbreak of the Revolution in 1789 a stupendous change took place. At the beginning of this period it would have been extremely hard to find a Frenchman who had been to England or knew the English language. At the end of it, it would have been equally difficult to find an educated man in France who was ignorant of English and England. When the great reaction against the protective spirit began, the foremost thinkers, first, and then their followers, the educated classes, turned their eyes with respect, and then with admiration and enthusiasm, to the country where greater freedom of thought and action prevailed than anywhere else, at that time, in the world. There was scarcely a single eminent Frenchman, during the two generations which preceded the Revolution, who did not either know English or go to England ; and many of them did both. Buffon, the naturalist, Brissot, Helvétius, Jussieu, Lalande, Morellet, Mirabeau, Raynal, Roland and his celebrated wife, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Voltaire, and many others among the ablest Frenchmen of the time thronged eagerly to London. Voltaire devoted himself with ardor to the study of English literature, from which he drew much of the material used by him with such prodigious effect. Cousin, in his "History of Philosophy," says : "The real king

of the eighteenth century was Voltaire; but Voltaire, in his turn, was a pupil of the English. Before Voltaire became acquainted with England through his travels and his friendships, he was not Voltaire, and the eighteenth century was still undeveloped." He it was who first diffused in France a knowledge of the Newtonian natural philosophy, which then rapidly superseded that of Descartes. Cousin declares Locke to have been the true teacher of Voltaire, who recommended his writings to the French, and was untiring in his praise. Locke's writings soon became popular, and supplied to Condillac many of the materials for his system of metaphysics, and to Rousseau for his theory of education. Voltaire was also the first Frenchman to study the works of Shakespeare, though he afterward endeavored to diminish what he regarded as the exaggerated admiration paid to them by his countrymen. So profound, indeed, was Voltaire's knowledge of English literature, that he was acquainted not only with the works of the great masters, but also with those of minor poets like Butler, theologians like Tillotson, metaphysicians like Berkeley, and other writers such as Shaftesbury, Chubb, Garth, Mandeville, and Woolston. And so with other great Frenchmen. Montesquieu had the English government in mind when he wrote his political philosophy, and imbibed in England many of his principles. The famous naturalist Buffon began his career as an author by translating Newton and Hales. Diderot was a passionate admirer of the novels of Richardson, and took the ideas of several of his plays from English

dramatists. His philosophic arguments were largely borrowed from Shaftesbury and Collins, and his first book was a translation of Stanyan's "History of Greece." Helvétius drew many of the views in his celebrated work, "On the Mind," from Mandeville, and never grew tired of praising the English people. He frequently quotes the authority of Locke, whose opinions scarcely any Frenchman in the age of Louis XIV. would have dared to approve. The writings of Bacon had been previously but little known in France; but they were now translated, and the classification of the human faculties, contained in them, became the basis of the celebrated Encyclopædia, at the head of which were Diderot and d'Alembert. In thirty-four years the "Theory of Moral Sentiments" of Adam Smith was translated three times by three different Frenchmen; and when the same great author's "Wealth of Nations," the corner-stone of Political Economy, appeared, Morellet immediately began to turn it into French, but was prevented from publishing his translation because, before he could do so, another one appeared in a French periodical. The "Commentaries" of Blackstone were translated by Coyer, and the "Political Discourses" of Hume by Le Blanc, who also wrote a special work upon the English. A large portion of the numerous writings of Baron d'Holbach, whose famous dinners in Paris brought together the most illustrious men of the age, consisted of translations from the English; and, in fact, Frenchmen of all tastes and of the most opposite pursuits were agreed in their immense admiration

for English literature. Poets, mathematicians, historians, naturalists, philosophers, essayists, anatomists, physiologists, philologists, antiquaries, all seemed to agree as to the necessity of studying a language and a people on whom their fathers had not deigned to waste a thought except in contempt. To mention but a very few among the long list which Buckle gives, the English language was known to mathematicians like Montucla, d'Alembert, and Lalande; to anatomists, physiologists and medical writers such as Bichat, Cabanis, and Pinel; to naturalists besides Buffon, such as Haüy and Romé de Lisle; to philologists and historians like de Brosses and Volney; to various poets and dramatists and many miscellaneous writers. In fact, Le Blanc, who wrote less than thirty-five years after the death of Louis XIV., says: "We have placed English lately in the rank of the learned languages; even our women learn it, and have dropped Italian to study the tongue of this philosophic people." And not merely the great writers who prepared the way to the Revolution—the actors themselves in the terrible drama were also familiar with English. Carra, Dumouriez, Lafayette, Lanthénas, Camille Desmoulins, Marat, Mirabeau, Mounier, Le Brun, Brissot, Madame Roland, Condorcet, and the Duke of Orléans, nicknamed *Égalité*, were all acquainted with the English language. Marat was such a master of English that he actually wrote two books in it; one of which, entitled "The Chains of Slavery," was afterwards translated into French. Mirabeau translated Watson's "History of Philip II.," and also parts of Milton, especially

the democratic passages. He was a profound student of the English constitution, and is said to have delivered, as his own, in the National Assembly, portions of the speeches of Burke. "In London," says Lamartine, "the Duke of Orléans acquired a taste for liberty. From there he brought to France his habits of insolence toward the Court, his appetite for popular agitation, his scorn for his own rank, and his familiarity with the vulgar herd."

Such was the admiration felt by the French of that great age for the people whom so shortly before they had either ignored or despised. Before the reign of Louis XIV. France had produced great men. "But it is an unquestionable fact," says Buckle, "and one melancholy to contemplate, that during the sixty years which succeeded the death of Descartes, France had not possessed a single man who dared to think for himself. Metaphysicians, moralists, historians, all had become tainted by the servility of that bad age. During two generations, no Frenchman had been allowed to discuss with freedom any question either of politics or of religion. The consequence was, that the largest intellects, excluded from their legitimate field, lost their energy; the national spirit died away; the very materials and nutriment of thought seemed to be wanting. No wonder, then, if the great Frenchmen of the eighteenth century sought that aliment abroad which they were unable to find at home. No wonder if they turned from their own land, and gazed with admiration at the only people who, pushing their inquiries into the highest departments, had shown the

same fearlessness in politics as in religion ; a people who, having punished their kings and controlled their clergy, were storing the treasures of their experience in that noble literature which never can perish, and of which it can be said in sober truth, that it has stimulated the intellect of the most distant races, and that, planted in America and in India, it has already fertilized the two extremities of the world."

The French Revolution was "essentially a reaction against that protective and interfering spirit which reached its zenith under Louis XIV., but which, centuries before his reign, had exercised a most injurious influence over the national prosperity." Much of "the impetus," however, "to which the reaction owed its strength, proceeded from England"; and English literature "taught the lessons of political liberty, first to France, and through France to the rest of Europe." L^{er}minier says of England in his "Philosophy of Law": "This celebrated island gives Europe lessons in political liberty ; in the eighteenth century it was the school for all the thinkers of Europe." The first Frenchmen in that century that turned their attention to England were amazed at the boldness with which, in that country, political and religious questions of the deepest moment were discussed—questions which no Frenchman of the preceding age had dared to broach. With wonder they discovered in England a comparative freedom of the public press, and saw with astonishment how in Parliament itself the government of the Crown was attacked with impunity, and the

management of its revenues actually kept under control. To see the civilization and the prosperity of England increasing, while the power of the upper classes and the King diminished, was to them a revelation. "The English nation," says Voltaire, "is the only one on earth which, by resisting its kings, has succeeded in diminishing their power." "How I love the boldness of the English! How I love men who say what they think!" "The English," says Le Blanc, "are willing to have a King, provided they are not obliged to obey him." The immediate object of their government, says Montesquieu, is political liberty; they possess more freedom than any republic; and their system is in fact a republic disguised as a monarchy. "Property is in England a thing sacred," wrote Grosley, "which the laws protect from all encroachment, not only from engineers, inspectors, and other people of that stamp, but even from the King himself." Mably says in his "Observations on the History of France": "the Hanoverians are only able to reign in England because the people are free, and believe they have a right to dispose of the Crown. But if the kings were to claim the same power as the Stuarts, if they were to believe that the Crown belonged to them by divine right, they would be condemning themselves, and confessing that they were occupying a place which is not their own." England, said Helvétius, is a country where the people are respected, a country where each citizen has a part in the management of affairs, where men of genius are allowed to enlighten the public upon its true interests. And Brissot, who had

especially studied the subject, exclaimed with enthusiasm: "Admirable constitution! which can only be disparaged either by men who know it not, or else by those whose tongues are bridled by slavery." A volume could be filled with similar extracts; but these are sufficient to show the immense admiration for England which suddenly sprang up in France.

CHAPTER XXII.

PERSECUTION OF FRENCH WRITERS.

THE results were of prodigious importance. For the thinkers of France, stimulated by the example of England into a passionate love of intellectual progress and liberty, soon came into collision with the governing and privileged classes. This opposition was a necessary and healthy reaction against the spirit of servility that prevailed under Louis XIV., and would have been highly beneficial if the government had met it in a spirit of mediation and reform. But, unfortunately for themselves and for France, the nobles and the clergy had been too long accustomed to their privileges and vast social predominance to allow mere men of letters to attack with impunity their arrogant pretensions. Hence it was that, when the great French thinkers of the time attempted to imitate the fearless spirit of their English neighbors, and to discuss freely those great questions of religion and government which are a source of such undying interest to man, the clergy and their allies, the nobles, were roused into hatred and anger, and used their immense influence with the government to bring about that "crusade against knowledge" which Buckle calls the

"second principal precursor of the French Revolution."

And few, who have not read Buckle, can form an adequate idea of the extreme to which this persistent persecution of every man who presumed to think for himself was carried. Not that men were actually killed or burned at the stake for unorthodox political or religious views. Such radical persecution as this might possibly have *crushed* all thought, and have staved off the Revolution indefinitely, as the Inquisitors crushed Protestantism in Spain, and Calvin Catholicism in Geneva. Such was not the case. The enemies of knowledge in the France of the eighteenth century no longer possessed the fervid convictions of genuine fanatics, and resorted, therefore, not to the persecution that crushes and annihilates, but to that which irritates and arouses to more determined resistance than ever. The writers of that time, like the fabled Antæus, who rose with tenfold strength from his mother, Earth, each time that Hercules hurled him to the ground, gathered new force of intellect and will from each persecution. Whole editions of their works might be burnt or otherwise suppressed, but others were surreptitiously printed and eagerly read by thousands in whom a new thirst for knowledge and liberty had arisen. It is difficult to exaggerate the indignation which must have been felt by those brilliant writers at the systematic oppression which they had to endure at the hands of their ignorant and often vicious enemies. Buckle estimates that at least nine out of every ten authors, who wrote during the seventy

years following the death of Louis XIV., suffered some grievous injury from the government, and that a majority of them were actually thrown into prison. In fact—he goes on to say—this would be understating the case. For it is very doubtful if one literary man in fifty escaped with entire impunity. Scarcely a single Frenchman of that age, whose writings still survive, failed to meet with some punishment or other from the rulers of France. Among those who suffered either confiscation of property, or imprisonment, or exile, or fines, or the suppression of their works, or the ignominy of being compelled to recant what they had written, we find, among a host of others, the names of Beaumarchais, Berruyer, Bougeant, Buffon, d'Alembert, Diderot, Duclos, Fréret, Helvétius, La Harpe, Linguet, Mably, Marmontel, Mercier, Montesquieu, Morellet, Raynal, Rousseau, Suard, Thomas, and Voltaire. To suppose that all these illustrious men deserved such treatment would be ridiculous, even if we had no proofs to the contrary. But we have the proofs. Knowing the accusations which were made against them and the punishments that were inflicted, we can compare the two and see whether the latter were just.

Soon after the death of Louis XIV. Voltaire was falsely charged with having written a libel on that King, and confined for twelve months, without the pretense of a trial, in the Bastille. Having thus expiated an entirely imaginary crime, he was deliberately insulted one day at the table of the Duke de Sully by the Chevalier de Rohan Chabot, one of

those arrogant and dissolute nobles with whom Paris at that time teemed. The Duke, probably thinking it a sufficient honor for a mere poet and philosopher to be even noticed by a man of his own exalted rank, took no notice of the outrage inflicted upon his guest; but, as Voltaire retorted with one of those stinging strokes of flashing wit which made him the terror of his enemies, the noble chevalier determined to chastise him for his presumption. He caused Voltaire to be seized and beaten by ruffians in the streets of Paris, he himself standing by to regulate the number of blows. Still more: he not only refused to accept Voltaire's challenge to a duel, but actually obtained a *lettre de cachet*, or arbitrary warrant, by which the latter was again imprisoned for six months in the Bastille and then ordered to quit the country. Upon his return he wrote his first historical work, the well-known biography of Charles XII. of Sweden. This book contains no attack whatever upon either Christianity or the French government. It is in fact so absolutely harmless, and such a model of pure style, that we use it in our schools to teach boys French. But the all-seeing eye of government detected some imaginary fault in the book; and although permission was granted, at first, to publish it, the authorities withdrew their permission after it was printed, and forbade its circulation. His next work, the "Philosophic Letters" on the English people, was much more important than the life of Charles XII., and met with signal success; but, as he employed in it the arguments of John Locke against innate ideas,

the rulers of France determined to rebuke the novelty ; and, though just as ignorant of innate as of all other ideas, ordered Voltaire to be again arrested and his work to be burned by the common hangman. Which one of us can blame Voltaire for resisting, with all the intellectual force at his command, the despotic treatment which he received ? Those who reproach this great man and his great contemporaries with having frivolously attacked the existing order of things, and wantonly pulled down the old edifice of society, must either be ignorant of the intolerable wrongs which they had to suffer, or be incapable of seeing the palpable truth that, when a building is rotten and shaky, and threatens ruin to all its occupants, it *should* be pulled down. It is, indeed, a lamentable proof of the influence of empty phrases and of mere words upon men's minds, that so many have supposed they had conclusively proved the baneful influence of Voltaire when they had shown that he was not a builder-up but merely a puller-down. As a matter of fact, he was by no means a mere iconoclast ; but, even if he had been, how would that prove his labors any the less beneficial to his age ? As if the pulling down of a rotten edifice were not the necessary and indispensable condition of building up a new one in its place ! As if the surgeon, who amputates a mortified limb and saves a man's life, confers no benefit, and is even to blame, because unable to make a new limb in place of the old ! Still more : as if the surgeon who removes a foul and hideous tumor is to blame, because he neither wishes

nor is able to create another in its place! Voltaire was the chief social surgeon of France in the eighteenth century. He had no hesitation in using the lance and scalpel of his intellect to lop off the tumors and cancers of society wherever he saw them. But he did more than this. He strove to add in many ways to the sum of positive knowledge. Among other things he desired to acquaint his countrymen with the wonderful discoveries of Newton; and prepared, accordingly, an account of the labors of that mighty thinker. But here, too, the beneficent rulers of France interposed and forbade the publication of the work.

As if instinctively aware that their only hope of continued safety was in the ignorance of the people, they obstinately opposed every form of knowledge. Several eminent men—at their head Diderot and d'Alembert—undertook to publish on a grand scale that celebrated *Encyclopædia*, which was to contain the essence of all branches of science and art. But this splendid and, at that time, novel scheme, was at first discouraged, and then prohibited by the government. Such, in fact, was the fate of nearly every book of value in that tyrannical age. The reasons given for suppressing books would often appear silly or absurd, but for the grave results of the suppressions. In 1770 Imbert translated Clark's "*Letters on Spain*"; but the book was immediately suppressed because it contained a few remarks concerning the passion for hunting of the Spanish King, Charles III., which were considered disrespectful to Louis XV., who was also addicted to

that sport. Before this, that same vicious and profligate monarch had compelled the French Academy to expel La Bletterie for the perfectly truthful assertion that the great Roman Emperor Julian, in spite of his preference for the Roman religion, was not destitute of all good qualities. This punishment was comparatively mild; for Fréret, an eminent scholar, was thrown into the Bastille for expressing the opinion that the earliest Frankish chiefs had received titles from the Romans. The amiable and accomplished Lenglet du Fresnoy received still severer treatment; for he was cast four times into that same notorious prison, the only known pretext being that upon one of these occasions he published a supplement to the French history of de Thou.

At the risk of being tedious I will give still other examples. For concrete facts often make a more forcible impression than mere generalized statements.

Rousseau was threatened with imprisonment, was driven from his country, and his works were publicly burned. The famous work of Helvétius "On The Mind" was suppressed and burned by the common hangman, while the author was forced to retract his opinions. This, too, was the fate of Buffon, some of whose geological views, now known to be accurate, were offensive to the clergy. The learned work of Mably on the "History of France," which the conservative Guizot has thought worth while to republish in our own century, was suppressed as soon as it appeared. Raynal's "History of the Indies"

was given up to the flames and the author ordered to be arrested. Lanjuinais, in his work on the Emperor Joseph II., not only championed religious toleration, but also the abolition of slavery. The authorities, therefore, after declaring the book to be "seditious" and "destructive of all subordination," condemned it to be burned. Marsy's "Analysis of Bayle" was suppressed, and the author imprisoned. Linguet's "History of the Jesuits" was burned, his journal was suppressed, as were also his "Political Annals," and he himself was hurled into that accursed receptacle of great men, the Bastille. For writing a work on the Philosophy of Nature, Delisle de Sales was sentenced to perpetual exile, and his property was confiscated. The treatise by Mey, on French law, was suppressed; and that of Boncerf, on feudal law, was burned. Burning was the lot of the "Memoirs of Beaumarchais," and suppression of La Harpe's "Eulogy on Fénelon." Duvernet was seized and thrown into the Bastille, even before the manuscript of his "History of the Sorbonne" could be published. Suppression or prohibition was also the fate of de Lolme's work on the English Constitution; the "Letters of Gervaise"; the "Dissertations of Courayer"; the "Letters of Montgon"; the "History of Tamerlane," by Margat; Cartaud's "Essay on Taste"; the "Life of Domat," by Prévost de la Jannès; the "History of Louis XI." by Duclos; the "Letters of Bargeton"; Grosley's "Memoirs on Troyes"; Reboulet's "History of Clement XI."; Génard's "School of Man"; Garlon's "Therapeutics"; Louis' thesis on Generation; Jousse's

"Treatise on Presidial Jurisdiction"; the "Ericie" of Fontanelle; the "Thoughts" of Jamin; the "History of Siam," by Turpin; the "Eulogy on Marcus Aurelius," by Thomas; the financial works of Darigrand and Letrosne; Guibert's "Essay on Military Tactics"; Boucquet's Letters; and Coquereau's "Memoirs of Terrai."

Such wholesale destruction of property, however, was merciful in comparison with the treatment received by other literary men. Desforges, for example, who wrote against the arrest of the Pretender to the English throne, was, on that account, arrested himself, and buried for three years in a dark dungeon, eight feet square. In 1770, Audra, a professor in Toulouse, and a man of some reputation, published the first volume of an abridgment of general history. But the Archbishop of Toulouse at once condemned the work and deprived the author of his professorship; who, seeing the labor of his life rendered useless, and himself held up to public opprobrium, was unable to survive the blow. Seized with apoplexy, he died within twenty-four hours. Marmontel, Morellet, and Diderot were also among the victims of that insane folly with which the government of France persecuted literary men. A friend of Marmontel showed him the manuscript of a pleasant satire he had written on the Duke d'Aumont, and Marmontel repeated it to a few acquaintances. At this the Duke, who heard of it, was indignant, and called upon him to tell the name of the author. And, because he refused to betray his friend, Marmontel was seized and thrown into the Bastille. And even after his libera-

tion he was deprived of the right to publish the *Mercure*, upon which he mainly depended for his living. The case of Morellet was similar. In replying, in a little satire, to Palissot, a scribbler who had ridiculed in a comedy some of the greatest Frenchmen then living, Morellet made a harmless allusion to a patron of Palissot, the Princess de Robeck. The Princess' name was not even mentioned, but Morellet was confined for several months in the Bastille. The first work which Diderot wrote, after those which were translations from the English, was his "Philosophic Thoughts." It was burned by the common hangman. A few years later he wrote another book, in which he said that people born blind have some ideas that are different from those of people possessed of sight. This assertion, though highly probable, seemed dangerous to the sage rulers of the country. "Whether," says Buckle, "they suspected that the mention of blindness was an allusion to themselves, or whether they were merely instigated by the perversity of their temper, is uncertain; at all events, the unfortunate Diderot, for having hazarded this opinion, was arrested, and, without even the form of a trial, was confined in the dungeon of Vincennes. The natural results followed. The works of Diderot rose in popularity; and he, burning with hatred against his persecutors, redoubled his efforts to overthrow those institutions, under shelter of which such monstrous tyranny could be safely practised."

So great, indeed, was the madness of those in power, that, by making every able man in the

country a personal enemy, they at length arrayed the entire intellect of France against the government, and made the Revolution a matter of necessity. For, if ever there existed a state of society likely to madden men to desperation, France in the eighteenth century was in that state. The masses lived in wretchedness and poverty, and were held down by merciless laws, enforced with barbarous cruelty. The clergy, the nobles, and the Crown held supreme, irresponsible control over every man's liberty; they prohibited and burned the literature of the country, and plundered, imprisoned, and exiled the authors. Arrogant from long possession of power, they thought only of the present, and took no heed of the future. They "saw not that day of reckoning, the bitterness of which they were soon to experience." They even made futile attempts and impracticable laws to deprive literature of even that little freedom which it still possessed. Having in 1764 forbidden any work to be published in which questions of government were discussed; having in 1767 made it a capital offence to write a book likely to excite the public mind; having decreed still earlier the same penalty of death against any one who attacked religion, as also against all who spoke of matters of finance,—having done all this, the men who ruled France contemplated, but a short time before the catastrophe, a still more sweeping measure. Only nine years before the Revolution, when no power in France could have saved the institutions of the country, the government was so ignorant of the volcano upon which it stood, that the advocate-general

actually proposed to do away with all the publishers, and allow no books to be printed except by a press to be paid, appointed, and controlled by the government. If we make the extravagant supposition that such a proposal could really have been carried into effect, the greatest men in France would have been reduced either to silence or to servile advocacy of governmental views; and the ruin of the country would have been complete. For, in France, as we have seen, literature was the only means of resistance to despotism, the only hope of liberty. This must be borne in mind when we attempt to estimate the character of the great French thinkers of the eighteenth century, who so often are accused of frivolity in their efforts to break down the institutions under which they suffered. They, as well as the masses, were cruelly oppressed by the Church, the aristocracy and the Crown; and undoubtedly they were right to retaliate. ("There can be no doubt," says Buckle with justice, "that rebellion is the last remedy against tyranny, and that a despotic system should be encountered by a revolutionary literature.) The upper classes were to blame, because they struck the first blow; but we must by no means censure those great men, who, having defended themselves from aggression, eventually succeeded in smiting the government by whom the aggression was originally made."

In Buckle's opinion it was possible, by the concession of large and comprehensive reforms, during the first half of Louis XV.'s reign, to avert the Revolution. But towards the middle of the century

things began to change; and the attacks which, before, had been directed almost exclusively against the despotism of the Church, began to turn against the State itself. And, in a few years, the spirit of the people became so radically democratic that it was scarcely possible even to delay a revolution which, before, might possibly have been averted. When this, "the second epoch of the eighteenth century," had been fairly entered, the revolutionary movement became irresistible. In vain did the government now begin to grant some reforms. In vain was the power of the clergy diminished, and the order of Jesuits suppressed. It was in vain that the ill-starred Louis XVI. now called to his counsels reformers like Malesherbes, Turgot, and Necker. It was in vain to promise the equalization of taxes, the abolition of the worst abuses; and the repeal of the most obnoxious laws. "It was even in vain that the states-general were summoned; and that thus, after the lapse of one hundred and seventy years, the people were again admitted to take part in the management of their own affairs. All these things were in vain, because the time for treaty had gone by, and the time for battle had come." No mere reforms could now have averted the deadly struggle. "For," to use the language of that great historian whom I have so frequently quoted, "the measure of that age was now full. The upper classes, intoxicated by the long possession of power, had provoked the crisis; and it was needful that they should abide the issue. There was no time for mercy; there was no pause, no compassion, no sympathy. The only

question that remained was, to see whether they who had raised the storm could ride the whirlwind ; or, whether it was not rather likely that they should be the first victims of that frightful hurricane, in which, for a moment, laws, religion, morals, all perished, the lowest vestiges of humanity were effaced, and the civilization of France not only submerged, but, as it then appeared, irretrievably ruined."

CHAPTER XXIII.

RATIONALISTIC MOVEMENT IN EUROPE.

IT has been mentioned above, in a casual way, that the attacks of the French writers were directed first against the Church, but not till the middle of the century against the State. It will be necessary to explain the reason of this, and to trace the steps of the religious and political opposition. But, before doing so, it would be well to take a brief view of the writings of those English authors whose ideas, transplanted to France, had such a prodigious influence in hastening the Revolution. And in order to prepare the way for a scientific view of these writings, we should first take a glance at the general movement of religious thought in Europe as a whole.

Religions, like empires and political systems, like all other human institutions, arise, flourish, and decay. Their names may remain the same through centuries ; but their tenets, and, most of all, the interpretation and practical effect of these tenets, undergo a constant change. The Greek religion of the Homeric age of simple faith and unquestioning credulity was infinitely removed from the philosophic creeds of Plato and Aristotle. The Moham-

medanism of the "Sick Man" of modern Turkey is practically—whatever it may be in theory—a far different religion from that which fired the hearts of the men who swept like a tornado, eastward from Arabia to India, westward from Arabia to Spain and the confines of France ; a creed of far less intense fatalism than at the time when the Turks were the terror of all Europe. The word "Christianity," too, is only the common name which we use to designate phases of realized religious belief, which, in different ages, have been just as dissimilar as though we should call them by different names.

How absolutely different, for example, was the age of asceticism, when self-maceration and filth in the deserts of Syria and Egypt were the ideals and the practice of thousands of Christians, from the poetic and chivalrous age of the crusades ! In the one age, celibacy was the highest virtue, and women were regarded as an abomination and a curse. In the other, they were almost worshipped by their knightly admirers, and treated with a deference which sometimes degenerated into farcical absurdity. In the one age, the loathsome penances of Saint Simeon Stylites were regarded with boundless admiration by the Christian world. For a whole year, we are told, he stood upon one leg, the other being covered with disgusting ulcers. His biographer stood by his side to replace the worms which fell from the sores, while the saint said to the worms : "Eat what God has given you." For thirty years this famous saint is said to have stood upon the summit of a pillar, sixty feet high, ever and anon

bending his body almost to his feet in prayer. Thousands of pilgrims of high and low degree thronged to do him homage; a concourse of prelates followed him to his grave; and the general voice pronounced him the highest model of a Christian saint. No matter if his ascetic exploits are grossly exaggerated by his biographers. The Christian world believed it all and admired it. But how different a picture is this from that other age when all Christendom rang with applause of the savage manliness and brutal heroism of the Lion-Hearted Richard and his brother Crusaders! Simeon Stylites and Richard Cœur de Lion! What a contrast! How different, too, is the polytheism of the Middle Ages from the rationalistic deism of the eighteenth century! How different, again, the mild benevolence and comparative toleration of our own time, from the grim ferocity of Calvin and John Knox, or the merciless fanaticism of the Inquisitors of Spain!

Most of us, it seems, are in the habit of thinking of Christianity as a definite creed that has lasted now for many centuries. But upon closer examination we find a perpetual change. Not even the Bible has always been exactly the same; for the Latin Vulgate of the Catholics differs considerably from the various translations from the Greek and Hebrew which Protestants use. But even if this were not so, the greatest differences in realized belief—in the belief which is actually and concretely present in the mind—would still have existed in the different ages and nations of Christendom, as well as in the different individuals of the same nation and the same age.

For this realized belief depends, not so much upon that which is written upon parchment or printed upon paper, as upon the character of the individual as modified by the spirit of the age in which he lives. No matter though the written tenets remain the same, they are interpreted differently by different ages, different nations, and different men. For the practical belief of a time is a product of the time ; and, like its literature, its science, its art, its government, its laws, and its social customs, is a manifestation of the whole mental character of the time. And when this general mental character undergoes a change, the realized religion changes also. Whatever names we may use, the religion of a child is no longer the same, when the child has become a youth, and the youth a man. So, too, with a nation, which has its periods of infancy, youth, manhood, and old age, with a religious belief corresponding to each. And so, too, with Christendom as a whole.

For our present purpose we need go no further back than the great religious revolution of the sixteenth century. It is a melancholy fact that some of the greatest moral characters in history have been the leaders of movements, the deeper significance of which they themselves misunderstood. Martin Luther was a grand type of the popular leader, with depth of conviction and manly vigor of purpose—a man of stupendous force of will. And yet, if he could now rise up from his grave, and see what kind of religious belief, in Germany and in Europe at large, has issued from

the Reformation led by himself, he would be perfectly amazed. Not knowing the true nature of the causes which produced the great popular upheaval, of which he himself was but the instrument, he was also ignorant of what its ultimate results would be. In the beginning, he supposed himself to be merely inaugurating a purification of the morals of the Church, and the removal of the abuses that had sprung up. But instead of doing merely this, and instead of strengthening the Church by reform, he lived to see it split by revolution, and himself compelled to be the founder of a sect. Still more: he saw other sects, opposed in many respects to his own, spring up. But what he failed to see was that the Reformation was not simply an attempt at moral purification, and a religious revival, but was, in its deeper significance, a sign that the European intellect was emerging from its age of faith to its age of reason, a violent external symptom that men had reached that stage of intellectual development when they were no longer willing, in religious matters, to cling with blind faith to the apron-strings of the hierarchy, but were determined, thenceforth, to base their religious beliefs, not simply upon faith in the clergy, but upon individual judgment. It is true that Luther soon forgot that his rebellion against the authority of the Church could only be justified by asserting the right of every man to choose his own religion for himself; and that, after defying the human pope, he endeavored, in the Confession of Augsburg, to set up a paper one instead. Calvin, too, forgetful that he had preached

toleration when he needed it for himself, burned Servetus and ruled Geneva with a sway more absolute than ever a pope had done. But, in spite of these logical inconsistencies, which were due to the abnormal excitement and fanaticism of the time, the Reformation was none the less a stupendous outburst of the spirit of rationalism, in the sense in which Lecky uses the term. That is to say: it was an outburst of a "certain cast of thought, or bias of reasoning," which, in spite of brief reactionary fluctuations, has ever since been gaining strength in Europe; a general intellectual tendency, which leads men "to subordinate dogmatic theology to the dictates of reason and of conscience, and, as a necessary consequence, greatly to restrict its influence upon life"; which "predisposes men, in history, to attribute all kinds of phenomena to natural rather than miraculous causes; in theology, to esteem succeeding systems the expressions of the wants and aspirations of that religious sentiment which is planted in all men; and, in ethics, to regard as duties only those which conscience reveals to be such." Whether this tendency be for good or for evil is a matter for every man to decide for himself; but that the tendency exists, and has been increasing, on the whole, since the eleventh or twelfth century is an undoubted fact. During the Middle Ages theology deeply imbued every department of life, and was the pursuit of nearly every single thinking man. Science and art were merely her handmaids, and even kings submitted to being stripped naked and flogged by monks to atone for

acts of resistance to priestly authority. Such things were perfectly natural then; but the spirit of rationalism has since produced a mighty change; and, in our time, the bare hint that the Emperor William or President Cleveland could possibly imitate Henry II. of England, and voluntarily submit to be flogged by either a Catholic priest or a Protestant minister, would be received with a universal guffaw. During the Middle Ages and the first centuries of modern times it was implicitly and almost universally believed that miracles of various kinds were every-day occurrences. Thousands and tens of thousands of unhappy women and men were tortured and burnt at the stake for witchcraft during the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. For the imaginary crimes of devouring whole flocks of sheep and riding through the air on broomsticks, these wretched beings were tried and condemned to a horrible death by the ablest and most upright judges in Christendom. For, we must remember, the belief was not confined to the ignorant and uneducated, but was shared by Lord Bacon, and most probably by Shakespeare. Sir Thomas Browne declared that those who doubted witchcraft were not simply infidels but atheists; and Richard Baxter, in speaking of Cotton Mather's account of witchcraft in Massachusetts, said that "that man must be a very obdurate Sadducee who would not believe it." Before the seventeenth century scarcely a single voice was lifted in Europe against this hideous superstition; and miracles of other kinds were also believed to be of constant occurrence. To give but a single example

among thousands: Stoeffler, a noted astronomer and professor in Tübingen, who first pointed out the way to remedy the errors in the Julian calendar, predicted in 1524 that in that year the world would again be overwhelmed by a deluge. Such a prediction by so able and eminent a man sounds strange to our ears; but what seems stranger still is that the credulity of the time was so great that Stoeffler's prediction spread immense consternation through Europe, that many people living on the sea or on rivers abandoned their homes in terror, that numerous plans of rescue were proposed, and that the inhabitants of Toulouse actually built an ark to save themselves from the coming disaster.

Such was the "cast of thought" at that day; and it is unnecessary to prove the evident fact that since then a vast change has come over the intellectual tendencies of Europe. The great religious revolution may be said to have lasted until the end of the Thirty Years' War in 1648. But since then theology has ceased to be the dominant force in literature. Religious wars and religious persecution, and even religious intolerance, except in a mild form, have ceased; and hundreds of subjects besides theology now divide the attention of the able men of the world. In the last part of the seventeenth century, and occasionally still earlier, the rationalistic spirit, which had seemingly, but only seemingly, been overwhelmed in the rivers of blood that had flowed in theological strife, began to show its tendencies with renewed force. Already at the end of the sixteenth century Hooker, in his "Ecclesiastical

Polity," had declared that even the opinions of the Fathers of the Church could not be accepted if they clashed with reason. "For men to be tied and led by authority," he says, and . . . "to follow, like beasts, the first in the herd, they know not nor care not whither: this were brutish. . . . Companies of learned men, be they never so great and reverend, are to yield unto Reason." He added, however, that the reason of individuals should yield to the reason of the Church as expressed in great councils. But Chillingworth, who wrote his "Religion of Protestants" a generation later, went still further than Hooker, and declared that not merely the Fathers, but even the councils, must yield to reason. In deciding the relative credibility of Catholicism and Protestantism he says that each man is to obey not faith but reason. "For my part," he declares, "I am certain that God hath given us our reason to discern between truth and falsehood; and he that makes not this use of it, but believes things he knows not why, I say it is by chance that he believes the truth, and not by choice; and I cannot but fear that God will not accept of this sacrifice of fools." Chillingworth's work was immensely successful, and hastened the movement of which it was itself a symptom. Its fundamental principle—the authority of private judgment in matters of belief—was adopted by the leading English controversialists of the seventeenth century, such as Hales, Owen, Jeremy Taylor, Burnet, Tillotson, Glanvil, and Locke; and the practical side of the tendency was seen in the split of the Anglican

Church into numberless dissenting sects, among which the Independents carried the principle nearest to its logical extreme.

In France, Montaigne, who wrote his *Essays* some years before the proclamation of the Edict of Nantes in 1598, was the first to show clear symptoms in his works of the sceptical spirit. He probably recognized the existence of religious truths, but was sceptical as to the possibility of the human intellect's deciding which among the many religions of the world was the true one. A few years after Montaigne, Charron wrote his work "*De la Sagesse*," or "*Treatise on Wisdom*," in which the influence of the new rationalistic spirit is still more plainly seen. For in it the author attempts, for the first time in a modern language, to erect a system of ethics without the aid of theology. He tells his countrymen that their religion is the accidental result of their birth and education, and that, if they had been born in a Mohammedan country, they would have been as firm believers in Mohammedanism as they then were in Christianity. Hence, he added, "we should rise above the pretensions of hostile sects, and, without being terrified by the fear of future punishment, or allured by the hope of future happiness, we should be content with such practical religion as consists in performing the duties of life; and, uncontrolled by the dogmas of any particular creed, we should strive to make the soul retire inward upon itself, and by the efforts of its own contemplation admire the ineffable grandeur of the Being of beings, the supreme cause of all created things."

Such were the opinions which Charron published in 1601; and the same spirit of toleration became more and more prevalent as the seventeenth century advanced, as was signally shown in the policy of Richelieu, who, though a Catholic Cardinal, respected the *religious* liberty of the Huguenots, while crushing their centrifugal *political* tendency. And while Richelieu was carrying the spirit of rationalism into practical politics, the greatest of French thinkers, Descartes—not to mention his important contributions to mathematics and physical science—was effecting an immense revolution in the modes and attitude of thought. Great as a creator, he was far greater as a destroyer; and, in this respect, “was the true successor of Luther, to whose labors his own were the fitting supplement.” “What Luther had commenced in religion,” says Lerminier, “the quick and active French genius carried into philosophy; and it may be said, to the joint glory of Germany and of France, that Descartes is the eldest son of Luther.”

Descartes, a deeply religious man, endeavored to give a demonstration of the existence of God; not, however, by appealing to the Bible or the Church, but by his unaided reason. He was, in fact, the founder of that modern school of metaphysics, which, appealing to the reflective consciousness of the individual, has, in spite of its many absurdities, so greatly stimulated the European mind to thought. His great work on Method he wrote in French, and not in Latin, because, as he said, he expected his opinions to be more justly estimated

by those who employed their native and unaided reason than by those who only pin their faith to ancient books. This confidence in the unaided power of the reason, as we now know, was overweening, though sublime. So striking an example of the power which the spirit of rationalism had now gained is, however, well worthy of mention. So far from relying on the traditions of the past, and accepting the opinions of his ancestors as infallible, the bold and inquisitive mind of Descartes led him to begin the search for truth by uprooting and rejecting all his old opinions except the one which he said it was impossible to reject, the belief in his own existence. When I set forth, he tells us, in the pursuit of truth, I found that the best way was to reject everything I had hitherto received, and pluck out all my old opinions, in order that I might lay the foundation of them afresh. . . . We must not pass judgment upon any subject which we do not clearly understand; for, even if such a judgment be correct, it can only be so by accident. Our memory is filled with prejudices, and there are too many of us—said Descartes, a few years after the close of those frightful religious wars, of which the massacre of St. Bartholomew is the most famous incident—who “believe themselves religious, when, in fact, they are bigoted and superstitious; who think themselves perfect because they go much to church, repeat many prayers, wear short hair, fast, and give alms. These are the men,” he says, “who imagine themselves such friends of God, that nothing they do displeases him, that their passions fill them with

zeal for the commission of enormous crimes, as the betrayal of cities, the murder of princes, the extermination of nations, solely because they refuse to accept their opinions." The policy of Richelieu and the philosophy of Descartes had prodigious influence in increasing that rationalistic spirit of which they themselves were the most striking products. That spirit soon pervaded all departments of thought, and grew stronger and stronger until, quelled for a time by the tyranny of Louis XIV., it burst forth after his death with all the more violence.

In Germany, too, when the religious wars were over, and men were wearied out with theological disputes, that same spirit which, before, had produced the Reformation, rose again from the chaos of the sanguinary struggle. Mild and inoffensive sects like the Pietists arose, and individual thinkers began to break down the old traditions and pave the way for new systems. Leibnitz was the author of a philosophy, and endeavored to persuade the Protestants and Catholics to cease their controversies and unite Christendom once more. Francke's lectures on the New Testament at Leipsic so irritated the theologians of that university, who regarded themselves as the infallible guardians of orthodoxy, that he was driven from his chair. Thomasius also, who enraged the pedants of Leipsic by lecturing in German instead of in Latin, and the theologians by his rationalism, was driven from the university amid the tolling of bells. At the head of a band of admiring students, imbued with

the new spirit, he went to Halle, where he and Francke became professors at the new university, which was founded for them by the King of Prussia, and which, during the following century, was the headquarters for freedom of thought in Germany. So powerful was the new tendency, that the work of Thomasius against witch-burning had the effect of soon making most tribunals ashamed to try a person for sorcery. Pufendorf also aroused the anger of the theologians, especially in Saxony, by attacking ecclesiastical dogmas and the authority of Aristotle as interpreted by scholasticism.

But the anger of theologians was in vain. Whether for good or for evil, the spirit of rationalism advanced in Europe with resistless force. Temporary reactions in this or that country took place, as a matter of course; but these were but the eddies of an ever-moving stream. In France, as we have seen, the onward movement was checked during the reign of Louis XIV.; and we now have to pass in review the English authors whose writings gave a new impetus to French rationalism after the despot's death.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ENGLISH DEISTS AND OTHER WRITERS.

AND, first, let us look at Sir Isaac Newton, and inquire what effect his discoveries were likely to have upon a people who had been so tyrannized over by the clergy as the French during the reign of Louis XIV. With the details of his discoveries we are, of course, not here concerned, but only with their general nature. Newton placed the roof and spire upon that grand astronomical edifice of which Copernicus had laid the foundation and Kepler had built the walls. Copernicus discovered that the earth and the other planets move around the sun; Kepler, that they move in elliptical orbits according to certain laws; and Newton, that the force which causes these vast bodies to move in interstellar space according to these laws is the identical force which causes an apple, when detached from its twig, to fall to the ground. We of the latter part of the nineteenth century, who have heard this doctrine since childhood, might at first be at a loss to see how its promulgation in France could have aided the literary men in their attack upon the Church. Having heard, perhaps, of but one theologian in our own day who denies the Newtonian theory, and asserts that "the sun do move" around the earth,

viz., that famous divine of color, the Rev. John Jasper, of Richmond, Va., we can hardly appreciate the fact that there was once a time when the overwhelming majority of the clergy of all denominations denounced, as a damnable error, that doctrine which to us is a truism. But if we can succeed in placing ourselves in the mental attitude of that age, we must readily perceive the reason of the opposition. Before the time of Copernicus it was the almost universal opinion that the earth was the chief central body of the material universe. The earth appeared so vast in comparison with those apparently minute specks of light in the sky, which seemed to revolve around it each day, that it was perfectly natural to conclude, in the imperfect state of astronomical knowledge at that time, that the earth was the really important body, and that the sun, moon, and stars had been created solely for the purpose of giving light to man, the ruler of the earth. To the mediæval mind, man appeared the central figure of the universe, for whose especial benefit everything else had been created. These opinions being intimately connected with the theology of that time, it is evident that the enunciation of the doctrine of Copernicus must have fallen like a thunderbolt into the theological camp. The discovery that man, so far from being the all-important factor of the universe, was merely the inhabitant of an infinitesimal pellet revolving about a sun, which itself was but one among myriads of others in infinite space, must have been a shock so rude to the old-established beliefs that we can now scarcely

form a conception of its force. It must have shaken, to no small extent, that doctrine of final causes which is so bound up with theology. The Church condemned the Copernican theory; and Galileo, who accepted it, was confined in the dungeons of the Inquisition, and compelled to recant. The additional discoveries, too, of Kepler and Newton, that the planets moved, not capriciously, but according to fixed laws in obedience to the constant and invariable force of gravitation, struck a severe blow at the current theology. For men had been in the habit of attributing almost every striking and imposing phenomenon to the direct and immediate interposition of supernatural beings, either angels, devils, witches, saints, the Virgin, or God himself. Such things as comets, eclipses, storms, pestilences, and famines were believed to be visitations of Providence or of Satanic power. In the tenth century a whole army was put to flight by an eclipse of the sun; all Europe has more than once been thrown into frantic terror by a comet or an eclipse; and the mediæval clergy never failed to use such opportunities to exhort the people to a still more absolute obedience to their commands. When, therefore, science announced that eclipses were perfectly simple occurrences, in no way the immediate result of supernatural interposition; and when Halley demonstrated that even comets obey the inexorable and all-pervading force of gravity, the clergy of that time felt instinctively that a deadly blow was being aimed at their prerogatives and power. The whole force of habit, associations, and education led them

to oppose with all their might the new astronomical views.

But all was in vain. Their total defeat in this, and in their efforts to uphold the belief in witchcraft, are two of the most striking proofs of the triumphant advance of that rationalistic spirit, so deeply deplored by some, so joyfully greeted by others. Evidently the relegation of such important and striking phenomena as the motions of the heavenly bodies from the realm of immediate divine and Satanic influence to the domain of physical law was an immense curtailment of the sphere of theological activity. Since the establishment of the theory of gravitation on a firm scientific basis, no one any longer dreams of praying to be delivered from the baleful influence of a comet or an eclipse. But the clergy of that time bitterly opposed the men who first discovered that these things are subject to physical laws; and we may well imagine that the doctrines of Newton, as popularized by the master-pen of Voltaire, proved a powerful weapon against the hierarchy in France. Not that Newton was aware, any more than Luther, of the ultimate tendency of his work. Though himself a religious man, he was ignorant of the fact that his discoveries would weaken the influence of the clergy. Yet such was the case. "When we consider," says Voltaire,* "that Newton, Locke, Clarke, Leibnitz would have been persecuted in France, imprisoned at Rome, burnt at Lisbon, what must we think of

* Œuvres de Voltaire, Paris, 1836, vol. vi. p. 742.

the human reason? In this age was reason born in England."

Locke, too, though himself a believer in Christianity, failed to see the anti-clerical tendency of the philosophical views in his "Essay on the Human Understanding." Stillingsfleet, however, the Bishop of Worcester, with all the keen-sightedness of a theologian in detecting heresy, saw their tendency clearly and carried on a literary controversy with Locke. The latter denies, in this famous essay, the existence of innate ideas, and endeavors to show that all our knowledge and ideas proceed from two sources alone—sensation from without, and reflection from within. What use was subsequently made of this theory by Condillac and Helvétius we shall hereafter see. The writings of Locke show all those rationalistic tendencies that have been mentioned. A follower of the Baconian inductive philosophy, Locke did much to break down the traditions of the past. "It was from the writings of Locke and Bacon," says a living historian,* "that Voltaire and his followers drew the principles that shattered the proudest ecclesiastical fabrics of Europe, and it is against these philosophers that the ablest defenders of mediæval theology have exhibited the most bitter animosity." De Maistre, for example, the great apostle of the Catholic reaction of this century, assures us that, "in the study of philosophy, contempt for Locke is the beginning of wisdom." Bacon he calls a charlatan, and says that his "*Novum Orga-*

* Lecky, "*Rationalism in Europe*," p. 403.

num" not merely teems with individual errors, but has a general aim that is worthy of Bedlam. Though Locke accepted Christianity, he based his acceptance upon what he regarded as its nature and effects, and not upon the miraculous accounts in the Bible. He drew a distinction between the Gospels and Epistles, between the history of the deeds of the Apostles and their doctrines. The historical account of them is, according to Locke, only a legend of their miracles. No proposition that is contrary to reason should be believed, he says, on the authority either of inspiration or of miracle, because the reality of the inspiration or of the miracle can itself be only established by reason. He even distinguished between those apostolic doctrines which he said were intended only for the guidance of that time and those which were true for all time. That the Anglican clergy attacked him for these opinions need scarcely be mentioned; but rationalism had already taken too strong a hold of public opinion in England to allow any violent persecution. Locke was uncompromising in his advocacy of religious and political liberty. In the preface to his "Letters on Toleration" he says: "Absolute liberty, just and true liberty, equal and impartial liberty is the thing that we stand in need of." And again he declares: "I would not have so much as a pagan, Jew, or Mohammedan, excluded from the civil rights of the commonwealth because of his religion."

Locke's pupil, Shaftesbury, combined the philosophy of his teacher with his own sharp wit and the scepticism of Bayle, who, at the time of Louis XIV.'s

persecution of the Huguenots, had fled to the Netherlands. Deeply versed in the philosophy of the ancients, especially of Plato, Shaftesbury endeavored to erect a system of ethics apart from theology, and to show that virtue is simply the highest form of beauty. He attacks all intolerance and fanaticism, and ridicules the idea that God could possibly command any act which the unaided reason of man declares to be bad, or forbid one which reason declares to be good. Morality, he said, was far superior to any religion; and, though himself a believer in an all-wise God, he regarded atheism as much less dangerous than a false religion. A deist himself, and an upholder of what was known as "natural" religion, he denied all positive revelation.

The scorn of Lord Shaftesbury for the Christian religion, says Voltaire ironically, is a little too evident. In audacity and style he considered that Shaftesbury far surpassed Lord Herbert of Cherbury and Hobbes, which latter writer championed absolutism in the state, and acknowledged no other religion but that which the government sanctioned.

Toland, however—continues Voltaire, in his letters on English authors—dealt still more violent blows at Christianity. Being proud and independent, and irritated by persecution, he wrote against the Christian religion from hatred and vengeance. "Verses to his memory still exist," says Voltaire, "but they were not written by clergymen of the Church of England." Toland's works, says Schlosser, were mediocre and hastily written productions; but

the fact that they were so widely and eagerly read is a striking proof of the strength of the opposition to dogmatic theology at that time. Toland says that if he had to choose between believing in no God at all, or believing in God together with all which theologians have ascribed to him, he would prefer the former. He was in reality a pantheist, and violently attacked the doctrine of an anthropomorphic God. All prayer-books and liturgies he derided and ridiculed, but especially those of the Anglican Church.

Collins, a friend of Toland, was equally opposed to Christianity, but an earnest and serious man. His teacher, Locke, differed from him on some points, but gave him the credit of possessing one of the greatest of human perfections—a pure and genuine love of truth. Voltaire declares him to have been “one of the most terrible enemies of the Christian religion,” and ironically bewails the fact that the profound dialectic skill of Collins was employed against Christianity, and that Dr. Clarke was unable to reply satisfactorily to his arguments. The works of Collins were serious, and entirely different from the scoffing gibes of Toland, but so enraged the Anglican clergy that he was persecuted and several times compelled to fly to Holland. Diderot and d’Holbach had some of his works translated; and one of them was printed in the famous *Encyclopædia*.

Matthew Tindal, another of the deists, was a witty scoffer, who drew down upon his head the wrath of the Anglican hierarchy by his book against all churches upheld by the state. In another book,

called "Christianity as Old as the World," he attempts to demonstrate the impossibility of Christian revelation, and the folly of the belief in miracles.

More unobtrusive than Toland, Tindal, or Collins was Wm. Wollaston. Being a quiet and upright man, his book on the "Religion of Nature" was all the more favorably received. He made no attack on Christianity, but endeavored to erect a system of purely rationalistic religion, without any mention of revelation, of a last judgment, or of future rewards and punishments. Wollaston's book went through many editions and was translated twice into French, the second time, however, with arbitrary interpolations.

Morgan, another writer, endeavored also to set morality in the place of religion; and declared that the character of Judaism, which, he said, was not merely not divine, but actually devilish, still clung to the orthodox party.

Mandeville, Woolston, and Chubb were also radical writers; but far more important was Bolingbroke, who, in the opinion of his friend, Voltaire, united the knowledge of an Englishman to the polish of a Frenchman. Most of the deists attacked the dogmatic and historical side of Christianity; but Bolingbroke saw in its doctrines a structure erected deliberately by priestly fraud for hierarchical and political purposes. True Christianity, according to him, was nothing but "natural" religion. "In his philosophic works," says Voltaire, "Bolingbroke repeatedly declares that atheists are much less dangerous than theologians." His letters on

the "Study of History" were his most important work, and made an epoch in historical writing. For Bolingbroke employed the clear and intelligible language of the fashionable world, and thus rescued History from book-worms and pedants who pored over ancient genealogies and clothed their writings in a garment of tedious learning. And, indeed, the whole spirit of the time was directed against the defenders, not only of orthodoxy in religion, but of the old and antiquated in every department of thought. Bolingbroke ridiculed the scholastic pedantry of the schools and universities of his day and said that the shrewd common sense of a man of the world was worth more than all their ponderous lore. In religion, as in all things, Bolingbroke makes reason the arbiter of truth. "It is true," he says, "that the Fathers and the Councils may be quoted in favor of an artificial theology, but at bottom reason must nevertheless be the judge; and what I demand is that reason alone shall hold the office of judge in every Christian's breast who is able to appeal to her tribunal."

Bolingbroke was probably the wittiest Englishman of his time, and his writings were immensely popular with Voltaire, Montesquieu, and the other French opponents of the Church. Let us listen to the words of Voltaire concerning him, in that same ironical letter on English authors in which he affects to bewail the attacks of the other deistical writers. "After the death of Lord Bolingbroke," he says, "were published some of his works, more violent still than his philosophical ones. In these he displays

a fatal eloquence. No one has ever written any thing more powerful ; and we see, alas, that he held the Christian religion in horror. It is sad that so sublime a genius should have desired to tear up by the roots a tree which he might have rendered highly useful by pruning its branches. . . . It is time, according to Bolingbroke, to banish theology, as we have already banished astrology, sorcery, possession by the devil, the magician's wand, the universal panacea, and the Jesuits." And in a letter of Voltaire, over the name of Bolingbroke, he says : " Let us propose to men a God who is not ridiculous, who is not dishonored by old wives' fables. They will worship him without gibes and without murmurs, and will be afraid to violate the conscience that God has given them. . . . In a word, they will more gladly bend the knee before the Being of beings than before a native of Mecca or Bethlehem." *

Thus we see that the principal English writers of that time were in opposition to the old theology. And not merely the deists and anti-christians were in opposition. Within the pale of the National Church itself controversies were numerous and bitter. Everywhere the rationalistic spirit was seen in the break-down or modification of old creeds and old opinions. In his " Tale of a Tub," Dean Swift ridiculed the various Christian sects, and, in fact, heaped scorn, in his ferocious satires, upon nearly all existing institutions:

* *Cœuvres de Voltaire*, vii., *Mélanges Littéraires*, p. 253.

CHAPTER XXV.

DIGRESSION ON WITCHCRAFT.

WE have seen how, after despising the English and knowing nothing of English literature, the French, at the death of Louis XIV., turned to it with eagerness, and drew from it many a weapon to aim at their own tyrannical government.

But now comes a question. Why was it that the literature which, in England, merely modified and gradually reformed the modes of thought and the methods of government, should have had so prodigious an effect, when transplanted to France, as eventually to overthrow the government and bring about one of the bloodiest struggles in history?

The principle involved is not merely applicable to this case, but is of such general importance for the solution of similar historical problems, that it will not be amiss, I hope, to pause a few moments to consider it. For it is, in fact, important in every-day life, and, if acted upon, would save many a useless argument. It is simply this, that changes in men's opinions are the result far less of logical arguments than of a change in their psychological predispositions.

The history of witchcraft furnishes a very forcible illustration. Before the sixteenth century, scepticism on the subject of witchcraft existed, if at all, in only a vague and unsystematic manner. But in 1563 John Wier, a humane physician of Clèves, wrote a book in which he ventured to suggest that perhaps some of the supposed witches were in reality simply maniacs, and that the others were deluded by the devil, without being guilty of any sinful compact with him. This was a comparatively mild heresy; and in fact Wier, like the rest of his contemporaries, was fully convinced of the truth of all kinds of miraculous occurrences, as, for example, that legions of devils were constantly roaming the earth. He simply claimed that people were bewitched by the devil, who then cast suspicion upon some old woman, in order to do as much harm as he could. People were especially liable to diabolical influence and possession, he said, when their faculties were enfeebled by sickness and their temper soured by suffering. He showed how grossly improbable were some parts of the popular belief, and appealed to the princes of Europe to stop the effusion of innocent blood.

But the spirit of the age was against him, and his humanity almost cost him his life. For his arguments were of no avail with men whose minds were so powerfully predisposed against them. His work was violently attacked by one of the ablest men in Europe at that time, Jean Bodin, who "appealed to the popular belief in all countries, in all ages, and in all religions." He also adduced the authority of many of the great writers of Greece and Rome, and

of the Christian Fathers. Showing how the laws of all countries had recognized witchcraft as an actual crime, and citing hundreds of cases which had been tried before the courts of his own and other countries, Bodin could scarcely find words to express his amazement and indignation at the treatise of Wier. That an insignificant doctor should have such boundless confidence in his own opinions as to set himself against the authority of the wisest of mankind, appeared to Bodin the acme of arrogance and the climax of absurdity. And not simply this. It was also the extreme of impiety. Wier's book was a tissue of "horrible blasphemies," and the author "had armed himself against God." These were the words of one of the foremost thinkers of Europe, who was unable to see the force of Wier's arguments because the bias of the time was against them.

Similar was the reception of an English work called the "Discovery of Witchcraft," which was published in 1584. In this the author, Reginald Scott, unmasked the superstition "with a boldness that no previous writer had approached, and with an ability which few subsequent writers have equalled." Hence, if opinions were changed merely by powerful arguments, Scott's work would have had a prodigious effect. But Scott was in advance of his age; and, although his book was by far the ablest attack upon witchcraft that had ever appeared, and was written, too, in a popular style, it produced no appreciable effect. For the belief in witchcraft was a symptom of a certain general bias of the public mind, and was intimately connected

with the existing modes of religious thought. Mere arguments, therefore, were powerless to destroy it; and when James I. ascended the throne, he found the people glad to aid him in his zealous persecution of the supposed witches. To the English of that day the witches in "Macbeth" were not imaginary, but real beings; and when "Puritanism gained an ascendancy in the country, the superstition assumed a gigantic magnitude." But after the Restoration of the Stuarts, when the reaction against the gloomy tenets of the Puritans had ushered in the scepticism of the upper classes and the new admiration for physical science and the Baconian philosophy, the bias of thought began to change, and the gay Cavaliers to deride, not merely the solemn gait and snivelling nasal twang of their crop-eared opponents, but also the belief in witchcraft, ghosts, and the like. Not that the Cavaliers who ridiculed the belief attempted to give any reasons for their sneers. They simply laughed, because, apart from all argument, witchcraft appeared to them absurd. The bias of the age had changed; and it was in vain that in 1681 Joseph Glanvil wrote what was "probably the ablest book ever published in defence of the superstition." This book was the "*Sadducismus Triumphatus*," and opens with a regretful commentary upon the progress of scepticism on the subject of witchcraft. "Atheism is begun in Sadducism," it says, "and those that dare not bluntly say there is no God, content themselves (for a fair step and introduction) to deny there are spirits or witches, which sort of infidels, though they are not ordinary

among the mere vulgar, yet are they numerous in a little higher rank of understandings. And those that know anything of the world, know that most of the looser gentry, and the small pretenders to philosophy and wit, are generally deriders of the belief of witches and apparitions."

Numerous editions of the book were issued, and very able men came forward to sustain it. Henry More, the philosopher, wrote a long argument in support of its views, and pronounced the opponents of the belief to be mere "buffoons, puffed up with nothing but ignorance, vanity, and stupid infidelity." Cudworth, too, one of the ablest of all the English divines, declared that disbelievers in witchcraft could not escape "the suspicion of having some hankering towards atheism." The defence of witchcraft was, indeed, one of the chief subjects to which the clergy devoted their attention. The works written in reply to them were few in number, and, in point of ability, incomparably inferior to those of Glanvil, Cudworth, and More.

But all was in vain. The scepticism steadily increased. Instead of writing learned and lengthy treatises, the opponents of witchcraft merely scoffed incredulously, or treated the arguments of the theologians with a calm disdain. The work of Richard Baxter in praise of Cotton Mather, in 1691, produced scarcely any effect. Between the Restoration in 1660, when the majority of even the educated classes believed in witches, and the Revolution of 1688, when the majority of them were disbelievers, scepticism had silently but surely sapped the founda-

tions of the belief, which, after another generation, was confined to the ignorant classes and a part of the clergy. The able works of Glanvil, More, Cudworth, Baxter, and the rest, could no more uphold the belief than the able work of Reginald Scott had been able, a century before, to destroy it. A few of the clergy continued, till after the middle of the eighteenth century, to defend it. For example, John Wesley, the illustrious founder of the Methodists, wrote the following remarkable passage as late as 1768. "It is true," said he, "that the English in general, and indeed most of the men of learning in Europe, have given up all accounts of witches and apparitions as mere old wives' fables. I am sorry for it, and I willingly take this opportunity of entering my solemn protest against this violent compliment which so many that believe the Bible pay to those who do not believe it. I owe them no such service. I take knowledge that these are at the bottom of the outcry which has been raised, and with such insolence spread through the land, in direct opposition, not only to the Bible, but to the suffrage of the wisest and best of men in all ages and nations. They well know (whether Christians know it or not) that the giving up witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible."

Such was the protest of Wesley. But neither protests nor arguments could restore the belief in witchcraft to the men of that time, any more than they could restore to a grown man his belief in Santa Claus and the ghost-stories of the nursery. For the belief in witchcraft belonged to that period

of social evolution when the mind was predisposed to believe in all sorts of miraculous events. But when the mental constitution of society had grown into a more advanced stage of development, and men had come to regard such miraculous events as antecedently improbable, the phenomena of witchcraft silently faded away. In the period of its prevalence, powerful arguments *against* the belief had glanced from the unprepared minds of men, like bird-shot from the sides of an iron-clad ship. During the period of its decay, equally powerful arguments *for* the belief were equally impotent to uphold it.*

* For a full account of Witchcraft, see Lecky's *Rationalism in Europe*, chap. i.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ENGLAND AND FRANCE.

AND now for the application of the principle, illustrated by this digression, to the question why the arguments of the English deists produced, when transported to France, a so much more powerful effect than in England itself.

Stated generally, the answer is this: that the masses of the French people were predisposed to revolution, while the masses of the English people were not. France had been brought by Louis XIV. to the brink of ruin. Ecclesiastical tyranny had been exercised in England, it is true, as well as in France, and in every other country. But nothing had taken place in England in the seventeenth century which could at all bear comparison, for instance, with the frightful persecution of the Huguenots by Louis XIV. Of pauperism and misery among the lower classes there was also no lack in England. But the rich were taxed to support the paupers of their parish; they lived among them; and performed duties in return for their power. Bad as was the condition of the English masses, it could bear no comparison whatever with the abject misery of the French. The numerous bread-riots which broke out in various parts of France all during the eighteenth

century were ominous signs of the inflammable state of the lower classes. They themselves were too grossly ignorant to organize a revolution; but when the educated and thinking men of the country had been driven by ecclesiastical and governmental tyranny into determined hostility to the existing social system, the Old Régime was doomed. For they found the downtrodden masses eager to be led against their oppressors. In England the condition of the lowest class was far from perfect; but the great body of the middle class was contented enough. The intellectual tyranny of the Established Church was sufficient, in a rationalistic age, to create among thinking men that anti-clerical movement which showed itself in the formation of new sects, and in a literature hostile to the Christian religion. But it was not sufficient to drive the great body of the people into radical opposition.

In France, however, the abuses in the Church were at that time so great as to arouse the opposition of even the conservative classes. Hating the bishops and their privileges, men who, under free institutions, would probably have been on the side of religious conservatism, were eager to read the revolutionary literature that was directed, first, against the priests, and then against Christianity itself. Even the ignorant peasants, the most conservative class in religion, as in all things, were predisposed to hostility to the Church. For although their mental stage of development was far more likely to incline them to fetichism than to philosophic deism or atheism, they nevertheless hated at

least the upper clergy on account of the tithes and other ecclesiastical taxes.

It would therefore be a mistake to say that the anti-christian writings of the eighteenth century produced the violent overthrow of the old ecclesiastical system of France; but we should rather say that ecclesiastical tyranny in an age of rationalism produced the writings of Bolingbroke and Voltaire, and that the eager reception of these writings by the French people was a symptom of the fatal rottenness of the French church. The literature of any age is, indeed, in the first instance, a symptom and a result of the intellectual tendencies of the age, and only secondarily a cause of them, in that it may accelerate and strengthen the movement by which it is itself produced. Probably no writer has ever exercised so great an influence upon his own age as Voltaire did upon his. But even when this has been said, it must be remembered that Voltaire was, after all, but a product of the intellectual tendencies of his time. He was the very incarnation of the intellectual needs of his day; and the secret of his prodigious success was that he gave utterance, in a style of wonderful clearness and classic simplicity, to the thoughts which, though less distinctly, were already in the minds of his readers. The old edifice of French society had become rotten from top to bottom, and therefore the strokes that were dealt it by the writers of the eighteenth century were sufficient to overturn it. But in England religious radicalism was confined to the intellectual classes; the broad base of society standing firm, because

the condition of the middle and lower classes was more favorable than in France.

In France, too, there was political as well as ecclesiastical tyranny; and about the middle of the century the French writers began to attack the State as well as the Church. In England, on the contrary, whatever occasional abuses there may have been, there was more political freedom than in any other country at that time. Since the expulsion of James II., in 1688, the country had ceased to be a monarchy except in name, and had become an aristocratic republic. Representative government in Parliament, local administration of justice in the counties, and other free institutions were safety-valves by which the steam of revolutionary ideas could gradually escape. In France, on the contrary, literature was the only such valve; and literature was ruthlessly persecuted. What wonder, then, that in 1789 the boiler burst, and the long pent-up steam rushed forth with terrific force?

CHAPTER XXVII.

WHY THE ATTACK ON THE CHURCH PRECEDED THAT ON THE STATE.

I HAVE more than once mentioned that, during the first half of the century, the attacks of the literary men were confined mainly to the Church, and began, only about the middle of it, to be directed against the State as well; and have promised to point out the reason of this.

Evidently, in the normal progress of a nation, "political innovations should keep pace with religious innovations." For, religion and government being two of the most important institutions of mankind, it is desirable that, with advancing civilization, they should both undergo the gradual changes necessary to accommodate themselves to the successive stages of social development.

This was not the case in France, where, the minds of men becoming accustomed to the boldest speculations on religious and philosophical questions, the Church was attacked for more than a generation after the death of Louis XIV., while the State was spared. Hence "the order and balance of the country was destroyed." While the minds of the French were thrilling with an aggressive intellectual activity, their bodies were subjected to the most despotic oppression; "and they felt themselves possessed of

capacities which their rulers would not allow them to employ." When, therefore, the Revolution burst forth, it was not simply a rising of ignorant peasants against their lords, but also the rising of men in whom the anger caused by oppression was accompanied by a sense of advancing knowledge and of superiority to the oppressors ; of men who were in that unenviable condition " when the progress of intellect outstrips the progress of liberty, and when a desire is felt, not only to remove a tyranny, but also to avenge an insult." This it is to which must be ascribed some of the most demoniac features of the French Revolution. It is, therefore, of no little importance to inquire how it was that, while in England political freedom and religious scepticism have advanced simultaneously and gradually, in France, on the contrary, the ablest thinkers for nearly forty years neglected the freedom, while encouraging the scepticism, and diminished the power of the Church without attacking the absolutism of the State.

A chief reason for this appears to be the immense power which the protective spirit had gained over the French mind during the course of time ; which power is itself largely traceable to the great national vanity of the French people. Horace Walpole happily observed that the French " love themselves in their kings." They permitted their sovereign to acquire that enormous power, which proved so disastrous in the end to the Bourbon dynasty, because nearly all Frenchmen felt personally flattered and puffed up with importance by the pomp and pageantry, and the aggressive foreign policy of their mon-

archs. Thus the feeling of loyalty to the King was so deeply rooted in the French character that even the monstrous tyranny of Louis XIV. was insufficient to destroy the confidence of the people in the institution itself of absolute monarchy. Buckle has given a curious and interesting illustration of the strength of this loyalty and the protective spirit in France as compared with England. With the exception of King Alfred, sometimes called the Great, "But the English have scarcely thought any of their princes worthy of a title expressive of admiration. the French," says Buckle, "have decorated their kings with every variety of panegyric. Thus, to take only a single name, one king is Louis the Mild, another is Louis the Saint, another is Louis the Just, another is Louis the Great, and the most hopelessly vicious of all was called Louis the Beloved." Such facts, though apparently insignificant, are important as symptoms of the mental constitution of a people. The sturdy, proud, and self-reliant English people have never gone so far as to completely identify their national greatness with the personal greatness of their kings. But the French, imbued with that protective spirit which taught them, instead of self-reliance, the habit of relying upon others, became gradually so filled with the hereditary association between their own glory and that of their monarchs, that nothing less than the most unparalleled abuse of power on the part of the latter was sufficient to rouse them into opposition. No written laws, however stringent, could have protected the French throne so well as this public opinion, this halo,

which, in the French imagination, surrounded the oldest monarchy in Europe. No mere edicts and proclamations could have defended the abuses of power as effectually as that national vanity which so long induced the French to submit to slavery and grinding taxation, "in order that foreign princes might be dazzled by the splendour of their sovereign, and foreign countries intimidated by the greatness of his victories."

Hence it was that, when the French intellect, stimulated by the English, first began to awake from the lethargy into which it had sunk during the reign of Louis XIV., the idea of attacking the institution of monarchy scarcely occurred to even the most daring thinkers. "But, under the protection of the Crown, there had grown up another institution, about which less delicacy was felt." The Church, which had so long oppressed the consciences of men, was not sheltered by those associations of national vanity which so effectually hedged the person of the King. A fanatic priest had, in fact, murdered one of the greatest and most popular of all the French monarchs, Henry IV., of Navarre. Nor had the French clergy, with the exception of Bossuet and a few others, done much to increase the general reputation of France. It was therefore natural that, although the French were willing, for a long time, to submit to the despotism of the Crown because their vanity was flattered by the splendor of the King, they were much less willing to submit to the despotism of the Church, which, though just as tyrannical as the King, was less protected by those

popular traditions which form the chief support of institutions. Hence the aggressive writers of the early eighteenth century instinctively aimed their shafts at that one of their oppressors which was the more vulnerable and exposed; while the next generation, emboldened by the success of the attacks upon the Church, began to turn their weapons upon the State as well.

The above reasons for attacking the Church first were also re-enforced by another fact. "During the reign of Louis XIV. the personal character of the clergy had done much to secure their dominion." The foremost among them at that time were nearly all "men of virtue, and many were men of ability." Their tyranny was at least conscientious, and merely the inevitable result of entrusting theologians with great political power. "The great abilities and unblemished morals of men like Bossuet, Fénélon, Bourdaloue, Fléchier, and Mascaron diminished in some degree the ignominy" of blind obedience to their decrees. But after the death of Louis a change took place; and the clergy became not only dissolute but often extremely ignorant. Hence, submission to their tyranny became disgraceful, and therefore all the more difficult. When the heads of the Church became tainted with "open and notorious depravity"; when the former eminent bishops and cardinals were succeeded by the libertines of the Regency; and when, in 1723, the assembly of the clergy actually elected as their president the infamous Dubois, "the most notoriously immoral man of his time,"—it is scarcely wonderful that the former

reverence for the Church was changed to contempt.

And all this happened just at the time when the spirit of rationalism broke forth once more, with all the more force, on account of its previous artificial repression. The bold writers now rising into prominence were stirred with indignation "when they saw that those who usurped unlimited power over consciences had themselves no consciences at all." All the arguments borrowed from England against the rule of the Church evidently gained in force when directed against men of universally acknowledged debauchery. In one of his letters Voltaire informs us that those Englishmen who were aware that in France notorious rakes, who were raised to positions of honor in the Church by the intrigues of women, made no secret of their amours, but were gay composers of tender love-songs and daily indulged in long and Epicurean feasts, from which they went to church to pray for the light of the Holy Ghost and to boldly declare themselves the successors of the Apostles, [that the Englishmen who were aware of all this] thanked God that they were Protestants.

The reasons, then, for the crusade of the French writers against the clergy were abundant and strong. Their attack upon the Church was the natural and necessary reaction against the spiritual despotism of the preceding generations. For, in the long run, it is vain to attempt to crush those great social forces which are continually modifying and changing the intellectual features of nations. Different

religious beliefs are the concomitants of different stages of a people's development ; and, in spite of all that we may say or do, these beliefs are subject to inevitable change. If government allows religious scepticism to run its course, this change will be gradual, and in accordance with the successive spiritual needs of the people. But if an attempt be made to repress free thought by force, religious scepticism may, indeed, be held down for a time, but will sooner or later rise again with such violence as to shake the foundations of society.

In England the first course was pursued, in the main ; in France, the second. The English succeeded generally in upholding the right to exercise their own judgment upon even the most sacred subjects ; and as soon as the diminution of credulity had induced them "to set bounds to the power of the clergy," toleration was the consequence, and the development was normal and gradual. But the French allowed a superstitious king to increase the power of the clergy to such an extent that "faith usurped the place of reason," "the spirit of inquiry was stifled," and hypocrisy was the order of the day. If Louis XIV. had not interfered with the religious opinions of his subjects, they would have undergone a healthy and gradual change, as in England. But, instead of this, when the pressure was removed by the King's death, scepticism leaped forward with a violent bound. It was already too late to save the clergy, against whom the whole intellect of France was soon arrayed. "But the force of the storm might still have been broken, if the government of

Louis XV. had conciliated what it was impossible to resist; and, instead of madly attempting to restrain opinions by laws, had altered the laws to suit the opinions. If the rulers of France," says Buckle, "instead of exerting themselves to silence the national literature, had yielded to its suggestions, and had receded before the pressure of advancing knowledge, the fatal collision would have been avoided; because the passions which caused the collision would have been appeased. In such case, the Church would have fallen somewhat earlier; but the State itself would have been saved. In such case, France would, in all probability, have secured her liberties, without increasing her crimes; and that great country, which, from her position and resources, ought to be the pattern of European civilization, might have escaped the ordeal of those terrible atrocities, through which she was compelled to pass, and from the effects of which she has not yet recovered."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

JESUITS AND JANSENISTS.

TO give an account of the literary opposition to the Church and the Christian religion will be my next task ; but as a preliminary part of it, it would be well to notice the strife that was at the same time being waged between two factions within the Church itself—the Jesuits and the Jansenists—a strife which, like the similar ones in England, that gave rise to dissenting sects, was itself a sign of that same rationalistic movement which produced the deists and other enemies of the Church.

It was a struggle which, in a vague way, had been carried on from the early times of Pelagius and St. Augustine. The British monk Pelagius, the Hollander Arminius, and the Spanish Jesuit Molina have been at different times the leaders of the one view, the Africo-Roman Augustine, the Frenchman Calvin and the Hollander Jansenius of the other. To us the two opposing doctrines are best known as Arminianism and Calvinism. Jansenism was but a form of Calvinism—a kind of half-protestantism within the Catholic Church. Arminianism loves gorgeous cathedrals and imposing ceremonies, asserts the freedom of the will, and is aristocratic. Calvinism and Jansenism

incline to rigorous simplicity, virtually or explicitly deny the freedom of the will, and are democratic.

The order of Jesuits was anti-democratic, and was founded to uphold authority, and to antagonize the right of private judgment. With masterly skill they ruled the Catholic world for about two centuries ; and, in the beginning of their activity, performed services of great value to mankind. For, although they aimed, in their system of education, to fit pupils merely for so-called practical avocations, and to avoid all subjects likely to stimulate them to independent thought, it was nevertheless the best system which had then appeared. In dropping the old scholastic methods, and teaching new and fresher subjects, although with the intention of perverting them to their own ends, they sowed, in fact, the germs of their own decay. In spite of their wonderful organization, and their indefatigable industry as courtiers in royal palaces, as professors in the universities, as teachers in the schools, as preachers, as confessors, and as missionaries, they were utterly unable to crush the spirit of doubt and inquiry. During the first half-century of their existence they were intellectually in advance of their age ; but after that they gradually dropped behind it, and, instead of diffusing knowledge, saw that the only hope of retaining their dominion was to oppose it with all their might.

Among others, the Jansenists attacked them in the seventeenth century ; but although a progressive public opinion hailed with delight the "Provincial

Letters "of Pascal, who was an ardent Jansenist and opponent of the Jesuits, the latter were still far too influential with the Catholic governments to be overthrown. On the contrary, they were the instigators of the papal bull in 1653, which anathematized five propositions on grace and predestination in the posthumous work of Jansenius on St. Augustine. They procured this condemnation on account of their uneasiness at the great progress made by the Jansenists, whose headquarters were at Port Royal, near Paris. Jansenism, as Louis Blanc points out, was especially strong among the upper *bourgeoisie*, which was exactly the class that largely composed the so-called parliaments; and just as these opposed, in their own interests, both absolute democracy and absolute monarchy, so Jansenism, which was a sort of compromise between Catholicism, the creed of authority, and Calvinism, the creed of democracy, might be called the parliament of the Church. During the reign of Louis XIV., who hated all innovation and all resistance to his own ideas, Jansenism, like all other independent movements, was kept in the background. But at the close of his reign, when Rationalism burst forth anew in various forms, Jansenism also acquired new strength. The "Moral Reflections on the New Testament," by the Jansenist Quésnel, was the book which started the strife anew. In it Quesnel declared that "the fear of an unjust excommunication should not prevent us from doing our duty." At this proposition, and a hundred others in the book, Pope Clement XI., in 1713, launched an anathema in the famous bull called *Unigenitus*.

In a dispute between Louis XIV. and the Papal See in 1682, Louis had defied the papal absolutism in these four articles: (1) The Pope has no temporal authority over kings. (2) The œcumenical councils are above the Pope. (3) The liberties of the Gallican Church are inviolable. (4) The decisions of the Pope in matters of faith are not valid until the Church has accepted them. At that time Louis was at the height of his power, and could defy even the Pope. But in 1713 he was an old man, bowed down by misfortunes of many kinds, and filled with superstitious fears, and could no longer take the same bold stand against the claims of the papacy. He commanded the prelates who opposed the bull to return to their dioceses, and compelled the parliament to register its acceptance. But the Jansenists were not conquered; and as soon as the King died the struggle broke out afresh, and filled France for half a century with the noise of controversy. But the aristocratic portion of the clergy, and also the central government, were on the side of the Jesuits. Jansenistic professors and teachers in the universities and schools were removed, the Benedictine order was punished, the Jansenistic nunneries were broken up; so that before 1760, in spite of the frequent resistance of the parliament to the King, almost the entire clergy was in favor of the papal bull. It seemed as though the Jansenists had lost the fight; and it is true that the Jansenist clergy had done so. But the Jesuit clergy had won nothing but a Pyrrhus-victory; and, in fact, the entire clergy had lost the fight. The true conqueror was that spirit,

of which Jansenism was but an evanescent phase—the spirit of Rationalism. In its deeper significance the real conflict had been between the upholders of authority and the upholders of individual judgment—between the clergy and the laity—and it was soon evident that the latter were the victors and the former the vanquished. The religious side of Jansenism degenerated into superstitious extravagancies, that cast the performances of the modern “Salvation Army” far into the shade. Alleged miracles were performed in great numbers; and women and men indulged in superstitious paroxysms upon the graves of the cemeteries. Mysticism and lust went hand in hand, and their votaries earned the title of *convulsionnaires*. This passed away; but the rationalistic side of Jansenism grew stronger; and, when the smoke of battle had cleared away, it was seen that the true victor, the real King of France, and of Europe—was Voltaire.

The Jesuits had been growing more and more intolerant, and were hastening to their fall. The Jansenist laity with rationalistic tendencies had organized, by the middle of the century, a powerful party in the parliament; and after this—so strong had Rationalism became—men of rationalistic or Jansenistic tendencies were actually, and not infrequently, made cabinet-ministers. Necker, for example, was a Swiss Calvinist by birth; as was also Rousseau, whose writings produced so immense an effect just before the Revolution. Evidently the Jesuits were out of place in such an age. The rumor, though false, that they were the instigators of Damiens’

attempt in 1757 to assassinate the King, was a symptom that the people had marked them for destruction. In April, 1761, the parliament ordered them to lay before it their constitutions; in August they were forbidden to receive novices, their colleges were closed, and several of their books were burnt by the common hangman. Finally, as the general of the order persisted in refusing to alter its statutes, with the famous saying, *sint ut sunt, aut non sint*—let them be as they are, or let them cease to be—the King's minister, Choiseul, took him at his word, and issued in 1762 the edict by which the Jesuits were condemned without even being heard in their own defence. Their property was directed to be sold and their order secularized; they were declared "unfit to be admitted into a well-governed country," and their institute and society formally abolished in France. "Such was the way," says Buckle, "in which this great society, long the terror of the world, fell before the pressure of public opinion. What makes its fall the more remarkable, is, that the pretext which was alleged to justify the examination of its constitutions, was one so slight, that no former government would have listened to it for a single moment. This immense spiritual corporation was actually tried by a temporal court for ill-faith in a mercantile transaction, and for refusing to pay a sum of money said to be due! The most important body in the Catholic Church, the spiritual leaders of France, the educators of her youth, and the confessors of her kings, were brought to the bar, and sued in their collective capacity, for the fraudulent

repudiation of a common debt! So marked was the predisposition of affairs, that it was not found necessary to employ for the destruction of the Jesuits any of those arts by which the popular mind is commonly inflamed. The charge upon which they were sentenced, was not that they had plotted against the State; nor that they had corrupted the public morals; nor that they wished to subvert religion. These were the accusations which were brought in the seventeenth century, and which suited the genius of that age. But in the eighteenth century, all that was required was some trifling accident, that might serve as a pretence to justify what the nation had already determined. To ascribe, therefore, this great event to the bankruptcy of a trader or the intrigues of a mistress, is to confuse the cause of an act with the pretext under which the act is committed. In the eyes of the men of the eighteenth century, the real crime of the Jesuits was that they belonged to the past rather than to the present, and that, by defending the abuses of ancient establishments, they obstructed the progress of mankind. They stood in the way of the age, and the age swept them from its path. This was the real cause of their abolition: a cause not likely to be perceived by those writers"—continues Buckle—"who, under the guise of historians, are only collectors of the prattle and gossip of courts."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE ATTACK ON THE CHURCH.

I HAVE said that the real victor in the controversy between the Jansenists and the Jesuits was neither the former nor the latter, but the apostle of Rationalism—Voltaire. There were many other writers of ability who joined in the onslaught upon the clergy ; but Voltaire was the chief of them all, and embodied more perfectly than any other the intellectual spirit of his generation. That spirit was one which tended more and more to reject tradition and authority in all things, and to appeal to the simple and unaided reasoning faculty of the individual. It was also an age of brilliant conversation—an age when the Parisian *salons* were of immense importance. The works of the writers were eagerly discussed in these *salons*, and written in a style so absolutely clear, as to be entirely intelligible to the members of the fashionable society, women as well as men. Taine has given a very able account of the nature of this style, and of the *esprit classique*, that cast of thought of which the style was the written expression ; but I can merely refer the reader to him, my space being too limited to admit of more than a passing notice. And, indeed, in sketching the different authors, lack of space would prevent

me from giving anything like an exhaustive criticism, even were I competent to do so. All that I can do is to point out those salient features of their writings that show us the general tendency of that intellectual revolution which was the necessary precursor of the outbreak of 1789.

Voltaire was a vain man, and in other respects one whose character could not be called perfect. But although these things are interesting and important for his biography, they are of little consequence for the purpose of this work, which is to trace the causes of the French Revolution. For this purpose the writings of Voltaire are of capital importance.

"Voltaire!" cries Louis Blanc, who blames him for his contempt of the ignorant lower class, "Voltaire! Is it permissible to lay hand upon this great idol? Can an heir of the eighteenth century dare to do so? For, after all, the path upon which the living generations are marching was traced out by Voltaire. He was such a man that, from love or from hate, the whole world is interested, one way or the other, in his glory. What a destiny! To be for sixty years the embodiment of all the intellect of Europe, to be the history of a century; to write, and thereby to reign; to make princes either proud of having learnt to think, or ashamed of being merely powerful; to sit in the retirement of a studious retreat, and keep whole nations breathless with expectancy, and their dominators with anxiety—to brand persecution with infamy, and to make it tremble; to proclaim toleration; to fight and conquer for humanity; in an unparalleled conspiracy to

make all priests his enemies and all kings his accomplices; to dash down by a scornful smile what Luther had merely shaken by prodigious outbursts of anger; and to live happy!"—With Louis Blanc, we well may say: What a destiny!

Endowed with a mind of vast breadth and comprehensiveness, Voltaire was able to pluck out the very heart and essence of the sciences, and to lay them before his readers in a form of matchless simplicity and clearness. Gifted, too, with a wit that has seldom been equalled, he knew how to wield the lash of ridicule with stinging effect. No one could reason more logically than he, when reasoning suited his purpose; nor did he make the mistake of confounding a sneer with an argument. But where a witty scoff was more effective than a syllogism, he had no hesitation in employing the former. With merciless wit he poured out the vials of his scorn upon the scholasticism, dogmatism, word-mongery, and grubbing pedantry of the academicians who doted upon the past because ignorant of the present. With amazing versatility he could play at will upon all the chords of the human heart; could dash off a sparkling epigram, or write seriously and gravely to prove the existence of God. Epic, dramatic, satiric poet, writer of prose romances, biographer, historian, physicist, mathematician, metaphysician, philosopher, scoffer—Voltaire was the prodigy of his age.

We have already seen that he popularized in France the writings of Newton and Locke, and thus did much to hasten the anti-clerical movement. In his torical writing, too, he founded, along with Boling-

broke and Montesquieu, a new era. Even his "History of Charles XII.," published in 1728, before his mind had fully matured, was an immense improvement on the old historical methods. For, although it greatly exaggerates the importance of the reckless adventurer, Charles, and is not altogether free from inaccuracies, it was, nevertheless, free from those assumptions of constant supernatural interference which previous historians had made; and its style was also far superior to the pedantic manner of the antiquarians who preceded him. This was an early work; but, before he made another attempt in the field of history, he enlarged his mind and the scope of his knowledge by the eager study of mathematics, physics, and jurisprudence, of the Newtonian system and the speculations of Locke. From these studies he acquired an ever-increasing admiration of the powers of the human intellect, though few men have ever seen so clearly as he the limits beyond which the intellect can never go. In 1741 he mentions his increasing love of history, and in 1752 he wrote his famous work on the "Age of Louis XIV.," the very title of which (as Buckle points out) shows the progress he had made in his conceptions of history. In his early work he had written biographical details concerning an individual, but in this he gave an account of an age. In the introduction he declares his intention to describe, "not the actions of a single man, but the character of men"; and in the work itself he says but little of battles and sieges, but much of commerce, internal government, finance, science and art, and the religious movements of the

age. He devoted too much space, it is true, to the amusements and amours of Louis; for an inordinate admiration of that monarch was one of the few youthful prejudices—and, according to Condorcet, the only one—that Voltaire was unable to shake off. But the work was nevertheless vastly superior to those of previous historians; and his next and greatest historical work, the celebrated treatise on the “Customs and Characters of Nations,” published in 1756, showed that his personal bias for Louis XIV. did not blind him to the comparative insignificance, for scientific history on a great scale, of petty biographical details concerning kings. This book, which is one of the greatest historical works ever written, was an ominous sign of the approaching Revolution. Voltaire was far from being a democrat, or from seriously attacking the political institutions of his country; but, in this great treatise on universal history, his neglect of the intrigues of cabinets and the personal peculiarities of kings was a symptom that he, too, was an unconscious advocate of democracy. “I wish to write,” he says, “the history of the human mind, and not a detail of facts that are almost always distorted; not, for example, to describe the feuds of petty lords with French kings, but to trace the steps by which men passed from the barbarism of those times to the civilization of ours.” This way of looking at history was then new, and a striking index of the general revolutionary direction of thought in France, as was shown by the fact that substantially the same views were held by Montesquieu, Turgot, Mallet, Mably, Velly, Villaret,

Duclos, and Hénault. Evidently such views were but a part of that broad intellectual movement which, by unsettling old opinions and directing the attention of men to the affairs of whole peoples, instead of to the acts of those individuals who were formerly supposed to sit by divine right upon their thrones, prepared the way to the Revolution.

Voltaire contributed greatly to the destruction of old opinions on many subjects, and thus to the ultimate destruction of the Old Régime. A few others before him had questioned the truth of those poetic but historically absurd fables concerning Romulus and Remus, Numa and the rest, which were long supposed to be an authentic part of Roman history; but Voltaire was the first to attack them with success—thus anticipating the labors of Niebuhr. He, too, it was, that first made some approach to painting the Middle Ages in their true colors—thus shaking the blind and almost superstitious reverence that men had felt for their ancestors and for everything that was old. He was also the first historian to say that perhaps free trade would be the true policy for all nations, and was one of the precursors of the Malthusian doctrine concerning population. These, and many more things which then were new and paradoxical, were advocated by Voltaire. No one did so much as he “to remove the stigma that rested upon actors.” The Church unequivocally declared that all actors were in a state of mortal sin, and, if they died without abjuring their profession, would be eternally damned. French actors who died in their profession were buried like dogs and denied all

religious rites. But Voltaire defended this despised and friendless class in poetry and in prose, with logical reasoning and with biting wit. "He cast over them," says Lecky, "the ægis of his own mighty name, and the result of his advocacy was shown in the enactment by which the French Revolutionists, at a single stroke, removed all the disqualifications under which they laboured." The Revolutionists also abolished torture, which was another of the things which Voltaire had unsparingly attacked. He also advocated the amelioration of the barbarous penal code of the time, and was an ardent opponent of war and apostle of peace.

For doing all these things he was execrated and hated by the clergy; and the chief task of his life was to destroy the empire of priests. In order to bring over the princes of Europe to his way of thinking, he pointed out the many instances in history where the clergy had antagonized the Crown. The long rivalry between the popes and the mediæval emperors; the proud Henry IV. standing barefoot for three days in the snow, and throwing himself with a flood of tears at the feet of Gregory VII. at Canossa, before he could obtain absolution; the murder of Henry of Navarre by Ravallac; the intrigues of the Jesuits in the Thirty Years' War—these and many other instances were brought forward by Voltaire. "If most kings"—he wrote to Frederick the Great, when the latter was still Crown-Prince of Prussia—"have encouraged fanaticism in their realms, it is only because they have been ignorant of the fact that priests are their worst enemies."

He never grew weary of attacking bigotry and fanaticism in every imaginable way, and preached toleration with untiring zeal. One instance has become especially illustrious. Jean Calas, a Protestant merchant of Toulouse, whose son committed suicide in a fit of melancholy, was falsely accused of having murdered the latter for wishing to become a Catholic; and fanatical priests excited a popular tumult and exercised such an intimidating effect upon the judges, that they condemned Calas, in spite of overwhelming proof of his innocence, to death upon the wheel, and confiscated his property. Calas endured with dauntless courage the horrible death, protesting his innocence with his last breath. His widow and younger son emigrated to Switzerland, where they met Voltaire; who then, with unwearying industry, collected all the documents of the case, and, taking them as a text, wrote his famous "Treatise on Toleration." And so resistless was his eloquence that he soon roused the thinking men of all Europe to indignation at the infamous judicial murder, and caused the decision of the court to be reversed, the name of the unhappy Calas to be cleared of guilt, his family restored to honor and presented with a large sum of money. "Voltaire was at all times the unflinching opponent of persecution." The "*Henriade*," his epic poem, was a glorification of tolerance in the person of Henry IV., the great proclaimer of the Edict of Nantes. "No matter how powerful was the persecutor," says Lecky, "no matter how insignificant was the victim, the same scathing eloquence was

launched against the crime, and the indignation of Europe was soon concentrated upon the oppressor. The fearful storm of sarcasm and invective that avenged the murder of Calas, the magnificent dream in the *Philosophical Dictionary*, reviewing the history of persecution from the slaughtered Canaanites to the latest victims who had perished at the stake, the indelible stigma branded upon the persecutors of every age and of every creed, all attested the intense and passionate earnestness with which Voltaire addressed himself to his task. On other subjects a jest or a caprice could often turn him aside. When attacking intolerance, he employed, indeed, every weapon, but he employed them all with the concentrated energy of a profound conviction. His success was equal to his zeal. The spirit of intolerance sank blasted beneath his genius. Wherever his influence passed, the arm of the Inquisitor was palsied, the chain of the captive riven, the prison door flung open. Beneath his withering irony persecution appeared not only criminal but loathsome, and since his time it has ever shrunk from observation, and masked its features under other names. He died, leaving a reputation that is indeed far from spotless, but having done more to destroy the greatest of human curses than any other among the sons of men."* Two months before he died in 1778 he wrote out a statement of his religious belief—in which he said: "I die with reverence for God, with love for my friends, without hatred of my enemies, but with a curse upon superstition."

* Lecky, *Rationalism in Europe*, ii. pp. 71, 72.

Before Voltaire wrote the letters on England which drew down upon him the wrath of the theologians, Montesquieu had already written a romance in which, under the mask of a correspondence between Persians, he heaped scorn and ridicule upon the religious and political institutions of France. For the attack on the State had begun even at this early date, 1721. But as the political opposition was insignificant before the middle of the century, I will speak now only of those of the "Persian Letters," which attacked the Church. With derisive wit Montesquieu lets his Persians scoff at the priesthood and the dogmas and institutions of the Church, such as transubstantiation, fast-days, and the like. The noisy strife of the Jesuits and Jansenists over the papal bull *Unigenitus* is treated with contempt, as is also the infallibility of the Pope. The dogmatism and fanaticism of the priests are caricatured in the person of one of the Persians, a Mohammedan theologian, who pours out a flood of violent abuse upon all who have any doubts in religious matters, and declares that no doubts could possibly enter the head of any one who would only have faith in the Fathers of the Moslem Church. In one of the letters the Pope is called a magician, with the power to dupe people into believing that three persons are only one, that bread is not bread, that wine is not wine, and a thousand other such things. In another the wealth of the bishops and the Pope, and their lucrative sale of dispensations and the like, are derided. Theological disputes, the Holy Inquisition, and all intolerance are held up to scorn; and

an attempt is made to show, by a comparison between the Gospels and the Koran, that the one story is a legend of no more authenticity than the other. The Capuchins and other monks, as well as the confessors and casuists, who drew a pecuniary profit for themselves or the Church from the sins of the rich, are also saluted with a volley of irony, while the story of the Garden of Eden and the Fall of Man is treated as an insipid Jewish fable.

This is sufficient to show the anti-clerical character of Montesquieu's "*Lettres Persanes*"; and it will be unnecessary to mention the works of the lesser writers, who, during the first half of the century, attacked the hierarchy with its usages and its dogmas. We have seen how the government endeavored, by imprisoning authors and burning their books, to crush out all free expression of opinion, and thereby rendered the opposition all the more violent and radical. But the anti-ecclesiastical works were widely circulated in spite of all this; and Holland especially became a huge printing-press which inundated Europe with the French writings hostile to the Church. The eager demand for these writings was a sure sign that they met the intellectual wants of the time, and was a measure of the strength of the rationalistic movement. The fall of the Jesuits was an ominous symptom of this strength; and the Jansenists, who were no more beloved by the radical philosophers than their theological opponents, were attacked in their turn. "What would it avail us," wrote Voltaire, "to be delivered from the foxes, if we were handed over to

the wolves?" It seemed as though nothing could save the French Church from almost immediate destruction. But the attention of the assailants began now to be divided between Church and State, and the fury of the onslaught against the former was somewhat slackened. It is true that the government now became more affected by the anti-clerical spirit, and began to seek its own advantage in the weakness of the Church. The abolition of the order of Jesuits was the most decisive step taken by the government against the Church; but other steps had already been taken. As early as 1749, the *contrôleur-général*, Machault, had issued an edict against mortmain, "which forbade the formation of any religious establishment without the consent of the crown duly expressed in letters-patent, and registered in parliament." And this policy of attack on the Church was the rule during the forty years that preceded the Revolution. For not only Machault and Choiseul, but also Terray, Turgot, Malesherbes, Necker, and Calonne were opponents of ecclesiastical privileges which no cabinet minister had previously ventured to assail. And along with the attacks on the privileges of the clergy came naturally a disposition to favor the doctrine of religious freedom, which before had been regarded as a dangerous heresy. Machault, the author of the edict against mortmain, was also the first cabinet minister of the century who showed an inclination to protect the Protestants against the persecution of the Catholics. He had but little success in this respect; but about 1760 the edicts against her-

esy, though not repealed, began to be enforced with much less strictness—a fact which dismayed the clergy, who, accordingly, at their general assembly of that year, addressed urgent remonstrances to the King against the lax administration of the laws. And after 1762, Sismondi tells us, the popular feeling against persecution and intolerance began to be perceptible even in the most fanatical country districts. Indeed, the opposition to intolerance became so strong that, in 1787, Loménie de Brienne, the Archbishop of Toulouse, who was then prime minister, presented an edict to the parliament for registration by which the Protestant heretics were to be admitted to all the civil rights of Catholics. Of course, the orthodox party denounced the measure as impious ; but, although the parliament was by no means inclined at that time to submit tamely to the royal will, it displayed no hesitation in registering the edict—so resistless had Rationalism become. For, although the philosophers had slackened their attack on the clergy since the middle of the century, the power of the latter had nevertheless been steadily growing weaker from internal decay. The interest in theology and theological disputes rapidly declined ; and the attractions of science drew off many able men, who in a previous age might have been leaders of the Church. Formerly, in the age of Louis XIV., the French clergy had been famous for their eloquence ; but Massillon, the last of the great pulpit orators, had died in 1742 ; and between this and the Revolution the orthodox French clergy “possessed no eminent men of any kind, neither

thinkers, nor orators, nor writers." The able men of the time were all seized by the new spirit, even those who chanced to be clergymen. Not a single able work was written in defence of the clergy, while immense numbers were written against them. "So low," says Alison, in his "History of Europe," "had the talents of the once illustrious Church of France fallen, that in the latter part of the eighteenth century, when Christianity itself was assailed, not one champion of note appeared in its ranks; and when the convocation of the clergy, in 1770, published their famous anathema against the dangers of unbelief, and offered rewards for the best essays in defence of the Christian faith, the productions called forth were so despicable that they sensibly injured the cause of religion." While Rationalism was advancing with gigantic strides, the clergy were receding. Most of their enormous privileges still remained; but they "had no active leaders; they had lost the confidence of government; they had forfeited the respect of the people; they had become a mark for the gibes of the age." In the streets of Paris priests were constantly liable to be hooted at and hissed. In 1766, William Cole, an English clergyman, wrote in a letter the following: "I travelled to Paris through Lille and Cambray in their public voitures, and was greatly scandalized and amazed at the open and unreserved disrespect, both of the trading and military people, for their clergy and religious establishment. When I got to Paris, it was much worse."

And in 1771, Horace Walpole wrote from Paris that, contrary to his former experience, he found that the churches were then so empty as to "appear like abandoned theatres destined to destruction."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE MATERIALISTIC PHILOSOPHY.

DURING the latter half of the century the rationalistic school developed a prodigious intellectual activity. Later on the economical and political works will come under our consideration; but, at present, we are concerned only with those writings, which, though containing fewer attacks on the clergy as a body of men, than in the previous generation, nevertheless served to sap their power more and more, by undermining the foundations of all revealed religion whatever. Voltaire was a deist; but Voltaire was the representative of the first epoch of the century; and the younger men of the second epoch were unwilling to stop at deism, but went on to pantheism, atheism, or absolute scepticism.

The first important work of the time in which atheism was openly advocated was the celebrated *Encyclopædia*, which gave the name to the new school of thinkers—the *Encyclopædists*. Diderot and d'Alembert were at the head of this undertaking; but many others contributed to its pages. This work, of which the first two volumes appeared in 1751, embodied the views of the time on religion, philosophy, morals, science, and art, and exercised

enormous influence. Besides the articles in the *Encyclopædia*, however, a great number of atheistical works appeared. In vain did Voltaire employ against them all his great dialectic powers and his terrible wit. Even the weight of his great name was insufficient to turn the scale. For the vices and tyranny of the clergy had so stirred up the minds of men that they went on and on in their rationalistic path, until all religion appeared to them a delusion and a curse. In 1775 the Archbishop of Toulouse declared in an address to the King, on behalf of the clergy, that atheism had become the "dominant opinion." If, by this, he meant that the majority, even of the educated classes, were atheists, he certainly exaggerated. But undoubtedly atheistical tenets rapidly gained ground, and were shared by a large number of the ablest men in France at that time. Not merely men like Damilaville, Deleyre, Toussaint, Maréchal, and Naigeon, but also Fréret, Saint Lambert, Volney, Condorcet, d'Alembert, Diderot, Helvétius, d'Holbach, Lalande, Laplace, Mirabeau, and many more were atheists. In 1764 Hume was in Paris; and, being a guest at one of d'Holbach's famous dinners, took occasion to raise an argument as to the existence of a real atheist, saying that he had never chanced to meet one. "You have been somewhat unfortunate," replied d'Holbach; "but at the present moment you are sitting at table with seventeen of them." D'Holbach himself had formerly been a deist,* and had attempted to convert

* Louis Blanc, i., p. 412.

the atheist Diderot to his own views. One day he showed him a machine, the admirable workmanship and beautiful construction of which displayed the genius of its inventor, and adjured his atheistical friend to perceive in nature also the workmanship of a great and Supreme Architect. Overcome with emotion, d'Holbach fell upon his knees, and, bursting into tears, implored Diderot to renounce his atheism. But in this strange intellectual combat Diderot was the conqueror; and the deist d'Holbach rose to his feet an atheist. And not only this: he became the author of a work that has been called the "code of atheism," in which he systematized the creed into a philosophy. It was entitled the "System of Nature," and appeared in 1770. According to this book, man is "a purely physical being"; and what we call the moral man is "merely this physical being considered from a certain point of view." Man results from an aggregation of material atoms with particular properties, the chief of which are thought, sensation, motion. What man is on a small scale, Nature is on a large scale. That is all. Moisten flour with water, let them ferment, and you will obtain organic beings; you will have life. Bring fire into contact with powder, and you will have motion. Matter, therefore, contains motion and life. The soul? A material organ. The passions? Invisible, fermenting molecules. Free will? An internal necessity. Immortality? A delusive dream. "Let us leave to enthusiasts," says d'Holbach, "their vague hopes; let us leave to the superstitious those fears upon which their melancholy is

fed ; but let those hearts that are fortified by Reason no longer dread a death that will annihilate all sensation." This book, which achieved immense success, and has been regarded as the very hand-book of atheism, was one of the results of that spirit which, in the second epoch of the eighteenth century, turned men's minds more and more from the internal to the external—from the deductive idealism of Descartes to the inductive materialism of Bacon and Locke ; from metaphysics, theology, and philosophy to mathematics and physical science ; from attacks on the spiritual domination of the Church to attacks on the material domination of the State.

Locke had declared that he could not see why it was any more necessary for the soul to think uninterruptedly than for the body to be always in motion ; and had also said that we should perhaps always be incapable of knowing whether a purely material being thinks or not. At this the theologians had raised a great outcry—feeling almost instinctively the tendency of the doctrine. But Voltaire defended Locke from the charge of irreligion.* "You cry out," says he, "at this proposition ; you see irreligion, then, in daring to say that it might be possible for matter to think. But Locke would reply : What would you say, if it were *you* that are guilty of irreligion—you, who dare to set bounds to the power of God ? What man is there upon earth who can assert, without absurd impiety, that it is impossible

* Voltaire, Dict. Phil., art. *âme*.

for God to endow matter with sensation and thought, if he wills to do so?"

Voltaire was a great admirer of Locke; but it was reserved for Condillac to erect a systematic psychology based upon the fundamental propositions of the English thinker. This he did in his "*Traité des Sensations*," a work of great ability, which appeared in 1754, and exercised a prodigious influence for two generations. Locke had said that all our knowledge proceeds from two sources, sensation and reflection; but he used the latter word in so loose a sense that his disciples construed it differently—it being uncertain whether he regarded it as an independent, as well as a separate, faculty. At any rate he had claimed its existence as a separate faculty; but Condillac went a step further, and maintained that all our knowledge comes from without, through the senses alone. To illustrate his theory, he supposes the case of a statue without innate ideas, but endowed with the senses of sight, touch, hearing, etc., and endeavors to explain how the first vague ideas might reach this imaginary man through the eyes; how these vague notions would become clarified and corrected by the sensation of touch, and so on. "Locke," says Condillac, "distinguishes between two sources of our ideas, sensation and reflection. But it would be more exact to recognize only one, either because reflection is fundamentally nothing but sensation itself, or because it is not so much the source of ideas as the channel by which they flow from the senses." In speaking of Malebranche, who, being unable to account otherwise for certain judgments

of the mind, attributed them directly to God, Condillac says that this was a very convenient way of disposing of a difficulty. It was not Condillac's way, however. The attention we give to an object, he says, is only the special sensations excited by the object; and our so-called abstract ideas are merely different ways of being attentive. To be attentive to two ideas at the same time is to compare them; so that comparison is only a form of attention—and along with a comparison there comes to us necessarily a judgment. Memory, too, he says, is a transformed sensation, and imagination is nothing but that very vivacious memory which makes absent things appear to be present. Thus we see that, in man—according to Condillac—external nature is the beginning of everything; that all our knowledge proceeds from nature; that we receive instruction only from her lessons; and that the whole art of reasoning consists in continuing the process which she has made us begin.

This same subordination of the internal to the external, of the mind to nature—which is the fundamental characteristic of the psychology of Condillac—is also seen in the system of utilitarian ethics erected by Helvétius in his work on the mind in 1758. In ancient times Anaxagoras had declared that man's possession of hands was the cause of his being the most intelligent of animals; and this doctrine was now either drawn by Helvétius from the Greek philosopher, or else originated afresh. "If Nature," says Helvétius, "had terminated our wrists with hoofs like those of a horse, instead of with hands and flex-

ible fingers, who can doubt that men, without arts, without dwellings, without adequate defense against animals, and entirely occupied with the care of obtaining food and escaping wild beasts, would still be fugitive wanderers in the forests?" When we consider that our thoughts are simply the products of two faculties—the faculty, namely, of receiving impressions from external objects, and the faculty of remembering these impressions when received—which faculties are also possessed by the lower animals, it is evident, according to Helvétius, that our mental superiority to them is really due only to the different structure of our bodies. From these premises he proceeds to deduce the fundamental principles of ethics. Memory being merely an organ of physical sensibility, and judgment being nothing but a sensation, all notions of duty and virtue must be tested by their relation to the senses. Our passions are due to our physical sensibility to pleasure and pain; and our virtues and vices are solely the result of our passions. Without the sensibility to physical pleasure and pain, men, being without desires, without passions, and entirely indifferent to everything, would have had no personal interests. But without these personal interests they would not have become socially united, would have made no treaties or agreements, would have had no general interests, and consequently no just or unjust actions. Thus we see that physical sensibility and self-interest are the origin of all justice, as well as of the other feelings which regulate human conduct. Ambition and friendship, for example, are derived

from this source. For men desire fame either for the sake of the immediate pleasure to be derived from it, or as a means of subsequently procuring other pleasures. The only use of friendship is to increase our pleasures or to mitigate our pains. To love the good for the sake of its goodness is as impossible as to love badness because it is bad. The mother who weeps for the loss of her child is actuated solely by self-interest. She weeps because she has been deprived of a pleasure, and because she sees a void that is difficult to fill. Thus it is that the loftiest virtues, as well as the meanest vices, friendship as well as avarice, pride, and the other passions, are the effects of physical sensibility. All that we have, and all that we are, we owe to external nature; and man is solely what he is made by the objects that surround him. The love of pleasure and the aversion to pain are the sole motives to our actions; and these society calls virtuous or vicious, according as they are beneficial or injurious to itself. Thus virtue and vice are entirely relative, and not absolute. To us, the sheep is the emblem of gentleness. Not so to the insects that dwell upon the blades of grass which the sheep devours. If these insects could speak, would they not exclaim: "Let us shun this voracious beast, whose jaws engulf both ourselves and our habitations. Let him learn to imitate the lion and the tiger. These beneficent animals neither destroy our dwellings nor feast upon our blood; but, as just avengers of crime, they punish the sheep for his barbarous cruelty to us."

Such is a meagre outline of the views contained

in this system of ethics, which so harmonized with the spirit of the age that the author soon obtained an immense European reputation. Even one of his ardent opponents, Saint-Surin, admits that "the strangers who were most eminent for their position or their enlightenment desired to be introduced to a philosopher with whose name all Europe was ringing." In 1775 Brissot tells us that the work of Helvétius was greatly in vogue; and Turgot, who wrote against it, complains that it was praised "with a sort of fury." Voltaire, who also attacked it, mentions that it was read by the learned, by the ignorant, and by women; and Georgel, in his memoirs, informs us that "this book, written in a style full of warmth and illustrations, was to be seen on every dressing-table."

CHAPTER XXXI.

PROGRESS OF PHYSICAL SCIENCE.

CONDILLAC'S "Treatise on Sensations," the work of Helvétius "On the Mind," and d'Holbach's "System of Nature" all bear the stamp of that resistless intellectual movement which directed the attention of the French, at that time, to the study of the external world. Physical science, as we have seen, had dwindled into insignificance in France during the fatal reign of Louis XIV. But with the reaction against the despotism of that time, a new spirit of restless inquiry had sprung up; and, in consequence of this, the discoveries in physical science in France during the second epoch of the eighteenth century were so numerous and so important as to place France, in this respect, far in the lead of all other nations at that time.

Nor is this foreign to our subject; but is so intimately connected with that dissolution of old opinions and modes of thought, which preceded the French Revolution, that, in order to understand the nature and causes of that great event, it will be necessary for us to take at least a general survey of the physical discoveries that were made by the great French scientists of that age.

Light, heat, and electricity, which are three of

the most important forms of energy, were all now investigated with signal success by the French. Many facts were carefully collected; but, what is of more importance, the facts were generalized, the laws of the variation of heat being worked out by Prevost (who was afterwards followed up by Dulong and Petit), and those of its conduction by Fourier, who applied mathematics to deduce the laws. Mathematics were also applied by Coulomb to the phenomena of electricity. He published his memoirs on electricity and magnetism during the seven years that preceded the Revolution; and already before this time important experiments had been made by d'Alibard. At the close of the century Malus discovered the polarization of light, and prepared the way for those researches of Fresnel, which placed Young's undulatory theory of light on a firm basis, and overthrew the corpuscular theory of Newton.

Chemistry and geology, too, received an immense impetus in France at that time. Lavoisier was the founder of chemistry as a science; and, among other things, worked out the laws of oxidation and combustion, and demonstrated the purely chemical nature of respiration. So important, indeed, were the chemical labors of the French that the newly founded science was called the French chemistry. Four Frenchmen invented the new systematic chemical nomenclature—de Morveau, Lavoisier, Berthollet, and Fourcroy. About the middle of the century Buffon made geology popular by reviving the theory of central heat, which excited

thought by the speculations connected with it. A number of his propositions were at variance with the Mosaic cosmogony, and excited accordingly the hostility of the theologians. More special, but still important, labors of other geologists followed, and effected a complete change in the ideas of the French, by showing them that even mountains of granite, and other portions of our planet, which appear most stable and immovable, are constantly undergoing extensive changes. And when the mind had become accustomed to this idea of universal change, one of the greatest of all naturalists, Cuvier, came forward, and, moulding the scattered geological facts into a systematic whole, gave them that logical coherence which is an attribute of every real science. Cuvier was the founder of scientific geology, in that he was not only the first to see the necessity of applying to it the laws of comparative anatomy, but was also the first who, applying this method, succeeded in combining the study of the earth's strata with that of the fossil animals found in them. To the French geologists science is indebted for many of the facts concerning the tertiary strata, in which remains of large animals are most frequent; Daubenton, for example, having published, as early as 1762, a pamphlet containing the results of his application of comparative anatomy to certain fossil bones, which were previously supposed, by some, to have been rained from Heaven, and by others to be the gigantic limbs of the Jewish patriarchs. It may be mentioned, as an instance of the former notions on such subjects, that, in 1718, an academician named Hen-

rior, a man well stuffed with that ponderous kind of lore, so scornfully ridiculed by Voltaire, had published a book, in which he gravely announced, as the result of his profound investigations, that Adam was one hundred and twenty-three feet and nine inches tall—Noah being twenty feet shorter, and so on. Daubenton destroyed these and similar notions, and thus prepared the way for Cuvier, whose union of geology and anatomy strengthened the idea of constant change throughout the universe. Cuvier still held to the geological doctrine of catastrophes; but, as Lyell remarks, his own discoveries supplied his successors with the means of overthrowing it, and thus did no little toward paving the way to that conception of universal immutable law, which is the basis of modern physical science and of modern philosophy. In fact, we may say that the French thinkers of the eighteenth century pointed out the paths upon which the leaders of physical science in all countries have since been moving. Cuvier, for example, as well as *Helvétius*, with his theory of the development of the human faculties by means of the possession of hands, may both be counted among those who shook the idea of the fixity of species, and helped to clear the ground for Darwin and the modern school of evolutionists. For, though Cuvier believed, himself, in the fixity of species, he unconsciously helped by his discoveries to destroy that belief—just as Luther was the unconscious advocate of a rationalism, the later manifestations of which he himself would have held in abhorrence.

In zoology, too, immense advances were made by

Cuvier and Bichat. For Cuvier abandoned the artificial method of classing animals according to their mere external peculiarities, and insisted upon the study of their internal structure—thus widening the field of comparative anatomy. By this important step he laid the foundation of immense progress in the science. Moreover, he not merely pointed out the true method to be used by his successors, but applied it himself with such skill and industry that he perhaps made more actual additions to the facts of comparative anatomy than any other single man has done. His chief glory, however, is that he applied the new method in a broad and philosophic manner, being the author, among other things, of the classification of the animal kingdom into vertebrata, mollusca, articulata, and radiata.

The labors of Bichat were principally bestowed upon the human frame, and were so enormous that, as Pinel tell us, he dissected more than six hundred corpses in a single winter. But he also made numerous experiments upon the lower animals; and went still further than Cuvier in the closeness of his method. Cuvier insisted upon studying the organs of animals, instead of merely their external appearance and habits; and this was undoubtedly a great step. For it brought to bear upon the subject the scientific exactness of experiment instead of the looser popular methods of observation. But Bichat pointed out the necessity of studying not merely the organs, but also the various tissues, of which they were composed. The stupendous industry of Bichat proved fatal to his health; for he died at the early

age of thirty-one. But even in this short space of existence his genius enabled him to accomplish results so great that Pinel declared it to be "scarcely conceivable that the life of a single man should suffice for such prodigious labor and so many discoveries either actually made or indicated." Bichat lays it down that the human body contains 21 distinct tissues, all of them, however, possessing the common properties of extensibility and contractility. He subjected these tissues to all manner of experiments, examining them in different ages and diseases, under the influence of moisture, air, heat, chemical substances, etc. In this way he took so great and sudden a step forward that several writers have declared him not simply an innovator, but the creator of a new science of general anatomy. The value of his method of studying the tissues may be seen from the fact that it led Agassiz to his classification of fishes; Owen to his remarkable discovery that the structure of a single tooth of any vertebrate animal is a sufficient criterion of the nature and organization of the species to which the animal belongs; and Schwann to his immensely important theory that all tissues, both animal and vegetable, may be referred to a cellular origin. In Bichat's work called "*Researches Concerning Life and Death*," which some consider his greatest production, may be found the germs of other modern theories; but I will merely quote Buckle's last sentence concerning it, which is this: "His essay on life may well be likened to those broken fragments of ancient art, which, imperfect as they are, still bear the impress of the inspiration

which gave them birth, and present in each separate part that unity of conception which to us makes them a complete and living whole."

Important steps were also taken by the French toward raising botany and mineralogy to the rank of sciences. Desfontaines and others, by weakening the artificial system of Linnæus, prepared the way for the great botanical generalizations of Jussieu, which he published in the very year when the Revolution broke out. Romé de Lisle and Haüy were the two Frenchmen of that epoch who achieved the greatest success in mineralogy; and the latter has been called by Cuvier the "real and sole founder of the mathematical science of crystals." His demonstration that order and regularity exist amid the seeming chaos of crystalline forms, was another step toward the modern conception of universal natural law; and was, of course, in so far, a blow at those systems of theology which attributed the most ordinary occurrences to immediate supernatural interference. "And it is very observable," says Buckle, "that the same generation which established the fact, that the apparent aberrations presented by minerals are strictly regular, also took the first steps towards establishing the far higher fact, that the aberrations of the human mind are governed by laws as unfailing as those which determine the condition of inert matter." For it was in the end of the eighteenth century that Pinel wrote his celebrated treatise on insanity, in which he rejected entirely the previous ideas concerning the mysterious and supernatural

nature of mental disease, and showed that madness, instead of being caused by the machinations of demons or magicians, is a strictly natural phenomenon, which inevitably occurs under given conditions.

In concluding this bare outline of the discoveries of the French in physical science during the last half of the eighteenth century, I will merely mention, without comment, the fact that the great Nebular Hypothesis of Laplace, as well as the mathematical discoveries of him and others, were also made in this period.

CHAPTER XXXII.

INFLUENCE OF PHYSICAL SCIENCE.

ALL this is intimately connected with that anti-clerical spirit which burst forth in the Revolution. Opinions are divided as to whether the discoveries of modern physical science can be reconciled with the doctrines of the Christian religion or not ; and the discussion of this question is certainly foreign to the subject of this work, which is simply to investigate the causes of the French Revolution. But it is perfectly germane to the subject to mention the historical fact that the great body of the clergy have been hostile to nearly every attempt of scientists to bring either material or mental phenomena under the domain of unchanging law, and thus to narrow the sphere of immediate supernatural interference. From which fact it is evident that the physical scientists, as well as the radical philosophers and atheists, were instrumental in undermining the power of the Church, and in thus helping to bring about the Revolution.

The extent to which atheistical doctrines were held before the Revolution has already been mentioned ; but a few more instances may not be out of place. A keen observer, Mme. Dudeffand, declared that the reason of the great popularity of the work

of Helvétius "On the Mind" was that the author had told every man his own secret. In 1765 Horace Walpole, in writing a letter concerning the philosophers he met in Paris, says: "Their avowed doctrine is atheism." And Priestley, the great English chemist who discovered oxygen gas and afterwards came to America, says in his memoirs: "All the philosophical persons to whom I was introduced at Paris (were) unbelievers in Christianity, and even professed atheists." Diderot vibrated between pantheism and atheism, and was of so ardent a temperament as to preach his unbelief with almost the zeal of a crusader. An able writer, he was a far abler talker, and kept his hearers spell-bound with wonder at his torrents of eloquence. At d'Holbach's dinners, in the *salons*, or in the open air of the garden of the Tuileries, Diderot amazed his countrymen by the brilliancy of his conversation; and, according to Louis Blanc, "philosophers, poets, abbots, fools, and princes" visited him eagerly in his room, up five flights of stairs, to listen to his flaming words. No less passionate was Mirabeau in his hatred for religion. The letters he wrote to Sophie Ruffei from the dungeon of Vincennes contain numerous passages that breathe out defiance to the pious. In writing to her about his mother, to whom he was passionately devoted, he says: "There is only one eventuality that could make me tremble, and that is, if she should become devout." And two pages further on he says: "The idea of seeing any one that I love become pious, or surrounded by pious people, makes me shudder. . . . Assuredly no man in the

world can advocate toleration more than myself; but I hate and dread the devout." On the next page he gives this advice to Sophie: "As a general rule, place no confidence in, and, if you can help it, have nothing to do with any person infected with religious zeal." . . . "It is claimed that a man may be pious without being a knave or a fanatic; and when I have seen such a man I will believe that it is possible, but not that it is usual. Until then, however, I am firmly persuaded that the *true believers* are, as a matter of fact, either credulous ignoramuses, selfish hypocrites, shrewd rascals, or dangerous enthusiasts." . . . Some "will not fail to tell you that a man who believes neither in the God of the Christians, nor in his holy mysteries, nor in the immortality of the soul, can be nothing but a scoundrel, because he has no interest in restraining his desires. But it is for you to remember whether my moral principles are as loose as my religious principles; decide whether he who believes virtue and honesty to be independent of religion, but most necessary and most sacred, although there is no heaven and no hell, or he who thinks religion and its terrors the sole bridle of human passions, does most honor to man, and merits more the confidence and esteem of his fellow-men." I have quoted these sentiments of Mirabeau at some length, because they are exceedingly characteristic of the ethical and religious ideas of the time, and of the intense hatred of the French toward their tyrannical and licentious clergy.

We see, then, that the advance of physical science

was closely connected with the opposition of the philosophers and others to the Church and the Christian religion. That it was also connected with the democratic movement against the political institutions of the Old Régime "is evident from the fact" that both scientific progress and social rebellion "are suggested by the same dissatisfaction with what has been previously done, the same restless, prying, insubordinate, and audacious spirit." In old France, society was divided up, as we have seen, into classes, each one of which was arrogant toward the one beneath it and jealous of the one above it. Class hatred was one of the chief characteristics of the time. But along with that eager study of the external world which arose in the latter part of the century, there also came a gradual dissolution of the old social prejudices, and a disposition to rank men, not according to their birth and the number of their high-sounding, aristocratic titles, but according to the largeness of their minds and the extent of their knowledge. The nobles and the *bourgeois* began to mingle together in the *salons* where the philosophers expounded their doctrines, and in the lecture-rooms of the great physical scientists of the day. "Even women of fashion," says Buckle, "forgetting their usual frivolity, hastened to hear discussions on the composition of a mineral, on the discovery of a new salt, on the structure of plants, on the organization of animals, on the properties of the electric fluid." Goldsmith, who was in Paris in 1755, says with surprise: "I have seen as bright a circle of beauty at the chemical lectures of

Rouelle, as gracing the court of Versailles." A craving for knowledge had smitten almost every rank. Men were now eager to hear discussions on sciences of which their fathers had scarcely heard the names. In Paris the scientific lecture-rooms were crowded to overflowing, so that some of them had to be more than once enlarged to make room for the vast audiences. In 1768 Antoine Petit began his lectures on anatomy in the great amphitheatre of the *Jardin du Roi*, and the throng which crowded to hear him, upon even such a subject as this, was so great that not only all the seats were occupied, but the very window-sills were filled. The sittings of the Academy, instead of being frequented by a few scholars, were visited by all whose influence enabled them to secure a place; and the throng at length became so great that it was necessary to diminish the number of tickets of admission. Townsend, an Englishman who visited France in 1786, says: "A numerous society of gentlemen and ladies of the first fashion meet to hear lectures on the sciences delivered by men of the highest rank in their profession. . . . I was much struck with the fluency and elegance of language with which the anatomical professor spoke, and not a little so with the attention of his auditors." Buffon, Fourcroy, Nollet, and Lalande popularized in brilliant lectures the sciences of geology, chemistry, electricity, and astronomy. So great, indeed, was this attention to the external world and the neglect of the internal, so rapid was the spread of physical science, that the old classical studies were despised. Some knowledge of physical

science was considered the essential basis of every good education. The scorn which Voltaire had heaped upon the pedantry of the degenerate philologists of his day had produced its effects. For Grimm says in a letter of 1756: "It is now troublewasted to deride the erudite scholars; for there are no more of them in France." And eight years later he says: "The extent to which the study of the ancients is neglected is disgraceful and incredible." In 1785 Thomas Jefferson wrote from Paris to Madison: "Greek and Roman authors are dearer here than, I believe, anywhere in the world; nobody here reads them, wherefore they are not reprinted." This abandonment of the classics, and the ardent study of the physical sciences, were significant symptoms of the radical revolutionary spirit which led men to break with everything that was old and to seize with avidity upon all that was new. The intermingling of the different classes diffused more and more the feeling of equality. Noblemen who went to learn scientific truths from the great thinkers of the middle class began to have a vague feeling that perhaps superiority of knowledge and intellect was better than superiority of birth and titles; and the Count de Ségur tells us that just before the Revolution the younger nobles preferred a word of praise from d'Alembert or Diderot to the most signal favors of a prince.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMISTS.

THE progress of physical science, then, was closely associated with the political movement which we are now to consider; and in considering it let us begin with the political economists.

They commenced their attack in the middle of the century. "About 1750," says Voltaire, "the nation, sated with verses, tragedies, comedies, operas, romances, romantic stories, and still more romantic moral reflections, and with theological disputes on grace and convulsions, began at length to reason about wheat." Having drawn his ideas from the preceding generation, Voltaire was unable to understand the new spirit, and wrote in 1759: "It seems to me that elegance and good taste are banished from France, and have given place to confused metaphysics, to the politics of numbskulls, and to enormous discussions on finance, on commerce, on population," etc. Before the second half of the eighteenth century, Political Economy, as a science, cannot be said to have existed. The economical writings previous to that time were much too fragmentary and unsystematic to deserve the name of science; but were usually mere pamphlets, written for the purpose of clearing

up some special point of economical practice. In the age of absolute monarchy, at the beginning of modern history, when the Crown had triumphed politically over the mediæval aristocracy, there arose an economical theory and practice that were suited to the needs of the predominant monarchical sentiment of the time. In order to equip with arms and ammunition, and to maintain the standing armies of mercenary troops, by which the kings of Europe were enabled to overthrow the feudal nobility, much more ready money was necessary than for the mediæval armies, in which the knights, who provided their own accoutrements, were the chief element. Much money was also needed for the increasing splendor of the royal courts; and it is therefore perfectly explicable that, in a monarchical age, when the body of the people sided with the King against the nobles, an economical theory favorable to the royal power and the national military strength should have arisen.

This so-called "Mercantile Theory" laid great stress upon the importance to a nation of a very large supply of ready money; and was so exaggerated that it was actually declared that money was the sole form of wealth, and that therefore the policy of the government as regards foreign commerce should be always to favor the exportation of as much merchandise (either raw or manufactured), and the importation of as much money, as possible. The entire realization of such a theory would, of course, be nothing less than the realization of the fable of Midas, whose touch turned everything to

gold, even his food and drink. But this the adherents of the Mercantile Theory failed to see. Ignorant of the true nature of trade, they supposed that one nation could only gain in commerce what another lost; and said that the so-called "balance of trade" was in favor of that nation whose exports of merchandise exceeded the imports. During the reign of this theory, each nation, when making commercial treaties, aimed to outwit other nations in such a way as to secure as much of their coin in return for merchandise and as little of their merchandise in return for coin as possible. Imports of merchandise were discouraged by government, and exports encouraged; and the meddling hands of officialism were thrust into every department of trade and industry. In Spain the system was carried so far as to play no inconsiderable part in bringing about the downfall of that country. But it was also in many ways disastrous in other countries. It served the monarchical interests, it is true; and therefore served, in so far, the people, during the period when the people identified their interests with those of the King. But there were other interests of the people besides their desire to increase the royal power and the military strength of the nation. And these interests were injured by the interference of the government with industrial affairs. The stimulus given by Colbert to the French manufacturing classes by means of protective or prohibitory tariffs inflicted a great injury upon the far more numerous agricultural, commercial, and other classes. The numberless govern-

mental regulations as to what was to be manufactured, and how; which things were to be exported, and which imported; what soils were to be used for wheat and which ones for vines, etc., were pernicious absurdities based upon the strength of that protective spirit which induced the French to suppose that politicians understand the affairs of business men better than these do themselves.

This interference of government with the industrial affairs of private individuals was the cause, too, not merely of material loss, and of great irritation to the people, but also of grave moral evils. One consequence, for example, was that "there arose numerous and powerful gangs of armed smugglers, who lived by disobeying the laws which their ignorant rulers had imposed. These men, desperate from the fear of punishment, and accustomed to the commission of every crime, contaminated the surrounding population; introduced into peaceful villages vices formerly unknown; caused the ruin of entire families; spread, wherever they came, drunkenness, theft, and dissoluteness; and familiarized their associates with those coarse and swinish debaucheries which were the natural habits of so vagrant and lawless a life." And yet, great as was the moral curse of smuggling, it was almost the only thing which prevented the total paralysis of trade through the absurd legislation of meddling politicians. In fact, Blanqui has said, in his "*History of Political Economy*," that to smuggling alone is due the fact that commerce has not perished under the

influence of the political system which shackled it by countless regulations.

As said before, the French Revolution was a violent protest against this meddling spirit, whether displayed in religion or in politics.

When industrial enterprise grew stronger in the latter part of the eighteenth century, the fetters that government had put upon industrial freedom began to be more keenly felt than ever before; and hence a new school of political economists arose, whose views were an index of the altered condition of affairs. In their eyes, the existing economical system was "artificial," "unnatural," and opposed to the welfare of the people. They therefore preached non-interference of government in industrial affairs; and set up, in opposition to the current political maxims, the idea that individuals possessed a so-called "natural" right to act as they chose in economic affairs. The protection of individual freedom and private property, and the maintenance of public order were declared to be the only legitimate objects of government. The expression *laissez faire, laissez passer*, which has ever since been the motto of the individualistic school of political economists, arose in this period. Instead of being subject to the regulations and edicts of statesmen, economic affairs were to be left thenceforth—according to the new theory—to the "government of nature," a phrase which gave to these thinkers the name of the "physiocratic" school.

Like the writers in other departments, they appealed to the unbiassed reason as opposed

to tradition, and the conservative principle of maintaining institutions merely because they are old. The physiocrats cleared the ground for the great work of Adam Smith on "The Wealth of Nations," and were the first to treat political economy from a broad and scientific point of view. The progress which had been made over their predecessors in philosophic training, critical observation, and logical reasoning was displayed in their writings, which were not merely short pamphlets on detached questions of immediate practical utility, but also elaborate works, in which the attempt was made to lay the broad foundations of a new science. Quesnay begins his work on "Natural Law" by discussing such ideas as freedom, order, justice, property, equality, utility, and the like. The predominance of physical science is seen in the attempts of the physiocrats to establish the existence, and to trace the workings, of ever-active natural laws in economic affairs; and, indeed, Quesnay, the founder of the school, was himself a physician, and versed in physical science. The physiocrats also laid great stress upon the ethical aspect of their proposed economic reforms, attacking the moral (or immoral) principles of the upper classes, appealing to abstract "justice," "right," etc., and undertaking the defence of the oppressed peasant class.

Like many other reactions, the economic reaction against the "mercantile theory" and the system of paternal government went to the opposite extreme—the truth being more nearly approached by a subsequent age, that was calmer and more judicial.

But, as this is not a work on political economy, it will be unnecessary to make a detailed, critical examination of the permanent value of the physiocratic doctrines. It will suffice to say enough concerning them to show clearly their revolutionary tendency in that time.

The physiocrats attacked the exaggerated notions of the mercantilists concerning the value of the precious metals, and insisted upon the paramount importance of agriculture. In this they went so far as to call the land the sole source of wealth, and to divide men into two classes, the productive class and the sterile class—the former consisting of the cultivators of the soil, and the latter of the rest of mankind. Evidently such a theory magnified greatly the importance of the most numerous and most oppressed class of the people—the peasants.

Briefly stated, the physiocratic doctrine concerning agriculture is as follows: * For successful agriculture are necessary, in the first place, land with buildings, such as dwelling-houses, stables, and barns; in the second place, live stock, wagons, farming implements, and seed; in the third place, food sufficient to nourish the laborers and the live stock during the year. Now, when the crop has been made, it will be necessary, in order to continue the agricultural industry with success, that the proceeds be at least worth a sum sufficient to keep the land, buildings, implements, etc., in repair, to replace dead stock or worn-out implements, to purchase the necessary seed

* Louis Blanc, i., p. 515, *et seq.*

and the provender for the stock during the coming year, and to pay the laborers sufficient wages for a year's support. Unless the crop is worth at least this much, it will be impossible to continue the industry; and if it be worth exactly this much and no more, even the smallest tax upon the farmer will be fatal. Hence only the surplus over and above this sum should be taxed. This surplus, the *produit net*, or net product, should not only be the sole object of taxation, but is the sole source of wealth to the non-agricultural or sterile class. Hence, the larger the *produit net*, the richer the nation; and to increase it should be the chief aim of government. But to tax the farmers beyond the *produit net* is to force them to abandon agriculture, and therefore to diminish the *produit net* of the nation. To increase it, *laissez faire, laissez passer!* Let the price of grain take care of itself. Make no attempt to lower its price by cabinet edicts. For, in the end, a high price can do no harm. It will enrich the farmer, who will then be able to invest more money in agriculture. Thus the land will be better cultivated; there will be a still larger *produit net*, and, abundance being diffused through the country by means of trade, the artisan and the factory laborer will receive higher wages than before.

The articles of Quesnay in the "Encyclopædia" on farmers and grains, as well as his other works, were devoted mainly to the economics of agriculture, and he found ardent disciples in the elder Mirabeau, Dupont de Nemours, Mercier de la Rivière, Baudeau, Letrosne, and others. But Gournay,

the originator of the catch-word *laissez faire, laissez passer*, turned his attention to the injury inflicted by the interference of government upon commerce and manufactures. He attacked the system of commercial prohibitions and protective tariffs, and the privileges and monopolies of the guilds and corporations. Seeing the absurdity of the countless statutes which the manufacturer was obliged to know before he could make a simple piece of cloth—statutes which ordered that the cloth should be just so long and just so wide, with just so many threads of just such a quality, etc., etc., Gournay also saw that the two greatest commercial nations of his time, England and Holland, were the very ones that had gone furthest in the abolition of these ridiculous trammels to commerce. Having a keen eye to the evils of centralization, he became imbued with hatred of legislative interference in economic affairs.

Thus we see that, at bottom, the schools of Quesnay and Gournay were guided by the same idea. Both demanded liberty for the individual—free competition. Quesnay demanded for the farmer the right to raise or lower the price of his grain at will, to store it up or to sell it, and to sell it at home or abroad, as he chose.

About the same time that Quesnay wrote his articles in the "Encyclopædia," the elder Mirabeau published in 1755 his work on population entitled "The Friend of Man," in which he asked the question, "What must the government do in order to maintain abundance in the kingdom? Nothing." That

is to say, *laissez faire, laissez passer*. To prevent famine, grant absolute freedom of trade in grain.

No one formulated more ably and clearly this philosophy of liberty and individualism in economic affairs than Turgot, in his work on the "Formation and Distribution of Wealth." Indeed, he conceives the right of property in so absolute a sense that, in discussing money-lending at interest, he says: "The profit that can be derived from money is doubtless one of the most frequent motives that induce the borrower to pay interest; it is one cause of the ease with which he pays this interest; but this is by no means what gives the lender the *right* to *exact* the payment of interest. For this, it is sufficient that his money is his own; the right to exact interest is inseparable from the idea of property." And a little higher up he says: "Since a man's money belongs to him, he is free to keep it; nothing makes it his duty to lend it at all; and if he does lend it he can do so on any conditions he chooses." Turgot was a determined opponent of the clique-like guilds and corporations, and a vigorous advocate of granting to the individual the right of choosing his own trade or profession without the consent of the guild in question.

Of course there were also opponents of the absolute *laissez faire* system. The brilliant Neapolitan, Galiani, for example, in his "Dialogues on the Grain Trade," opposed the free permission to export grain. But he nevertheless advocated the removal of the barriers which prevented the free internal passage of grain from province to province. And, indeed,

whether the political economists were adherents or opponents of *laissez faire*, they were at least agreed in the desire to better the condition of the mass of the people. They differed merely in the means which they considered as the best to attain this end. Some thought the best means of attaining it was to free the individual from the shackles of legislative tutelage, and let him take care of himself. But the protective spirit had been far too deeply planted in the French character to be suddenly plucked up; and therefore it was not strange that there were writers like Necker, Mably, and Morelly, who saw the means of improving the condition of the people, not in *laissez faire*, but in what they considered beneficent regulations by the State. Morelly, indeed, went so far in his advocacy of state absolutism as to anticipate the communistic doctrines of this century. In his work called the "Code of Nature" he draws an imaginary picture of what he regards as the "natural" social system. This is what is said in the first article of this natural code: "Nothing in society [*i.e.*, in his imaginary future society] shall belong as individual property to any person. Private property is detestable, and he who attempts to re-establish it will be imprisoned for the rest of his life as a violent madman and enemy of humanity." And article second says: "Each citizen is to be supported, maintained, and employed by the public."

Nothing could be more different from this than that question and answer of the elder Mirabeau which I have already quoted: "What must the government do in order to maintain abundance in

the kingdom? Nothing." Communism and individualism side by side; yet both dissatisfied with the existing order of things, both eager to benefit the masses, both revolutionary.

The interest in economic questions, as in questions of physical science, grew stronger and more intense as the century advanced to its closing decades. "Farewell to our fine arts," said Voltaire in 1763, "if things continue as they are. The rage for remonstrances [against the government] and financial projects has seized upon the nation." Many of the ablest men being drawn off from light literature to subjects in which substance rather than form was the essential, the style of French prose began to deteriorate, about twenty years before the Revolution, from its previous purity. In the *salons* the conversation no longer turned mainly upon the latest poem, or play, or witty anecdote, but upon physical science, political economy, and general political questions. An idea may be gained of the intense earnestness with which these questions were studied from the reception by the public of the famous "Compte Rendu" of Necker in 1781. This was merely a dry statistical report on the finances of France; and yet, so great was the general eagerness that more than 6,000 copies of it were sold on the very day of its appearance, and two printing presses had to be kept incessantly at work to supply the enormous demand. According to Ségur, it was even in every abbot's pocket and upon every lady's dressing-table; and Mme. de Staël, the daughter of Necker, says that 80,000 copies were sold. Fifty years sooner but a few

of the more curious would have cared to read such a book. But in 1781 the democratic movement had become so powerful that the Revolution was inevitable, and men were filled with feverish eagerness to read everything concerning the government.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ABSOLUTE MONARCHY ATTACKED.

THIS interest in economic and financial affairs was, indeed, but a part of that far wider interest which turned men's minds to the external world and produced a general democratic movement, which grew ever stronger and stronger, until it overthrew the monarchy of France, and shook the foundations of every throne in Europe. In describing this movement, too, I must confine myself to the salient points in the writings of the principal authors.

I begin with Montesquieu, but will pass over the indirect satirical thrusts at the political institutions of France which are contained in the "Persian Letters," and go on to his work on the "Greatness and the Decline of the Romans," which appeared in 1734. At the outset it will be well to remark that Montesquieu was one of the first to see how small is the importance, for philosophic history, of those personal anecdotes concerning kings and statesmen in which previous historians had so delighted. His method of ignoring the ultimate action of individuals upon the great march of events, is evidently democratic in its tendency, in that it belittles kings and magnifies the importance of the mass of the

people. Before Montesquieu wrote, it was the almost universal opinion that the overthrow of the ancient Roman republic was due to the intrigues of Julius Cæsar. But Montesquieu points out that this is utterly erroneous. Cæsar was the foremost man of his time ; but the aristocratic republic was overthrown by a democratic movement which had long been growing in force, of which Cæsar was merely the leader, and which would have taken place under some other leader, if Cæsar had never been born. But Montesquieu was not merely one of the founders of the philosophy of history. He used the history of the Romans to attack the political abuses of his own country. In a despotic age he dared to point out to his enslaved countrymen how Rome had prospered while her citizens were free, but had declined and fallen when they had lost confidence in themselves and entrusted their liberties to the keeping of despots. Montesquieu's most celebrated book is the "Spirit of Laws"—*L'Esprit des Loïs*—which appeared first in 1748,* and afterwards in a form revised and improved by the co-operation of a number of eminent men. In this work also he laid a new stone in the foundation of the philosophy of history by endeavoring to point out how the character and legislation of a people may be modified by external agents, such as climate, soil, and food. Owing to the imperfect state of physical knowledge at the time when he wrote, he fell into errors which a subsequent age has been able to

* Schlosser says 1749.

correct ; but this by no means impairs the importance of the method. What is of most consequence for our subject, however, is that his attempt to connect social with physical phenomena was another one of the innumerable signs which indicate to us the new spirit which had arisen in France, and of which Montesquieu's writings were but one of the products. As there have been countless different peoples, says Montesquieu, so have there been countless different political constitutions. But, among all these, he says that there are only three fundamental forms, which, however, are nowhere to be seen in entire purity, but only in the most curious and manifold mixture. These three forms, he says, are: (1) the Republic, with its two varieties, the Democratic and the Aristocratic Republic; (2) the Limited Monarchy; and (3) the Absolute Despotism.

The necessary basis of a republic, according to Montesquieu, being virtue, and its principle, the love of perfect equality, a pure and unmixed republic is an unattainable ideal. The absolute despotism, the form which he expressly declares to be more similar than any other to the continental states of his time, the form that has fear for its principle, appears to him a curse to mankind, a cause of degeneration, and a destroyer of morals. Constitutional monarchy, however, of which he took England as his example, he declared to be the only refuge for the European nations. All this may sound very commonplace to our ears; but in that age it took a

bold man to dare the expression of opinions which to us are trite enough.

Montesquieu lays the greatest stress upon his opinion that every constitution in which the legislative, the executive, and the judiciary departments are not completely separated must lead to despotism. In the English constitution, which was Montesquieu's model, the three departments, as is well known, are very far from being completely separated, as he supposed. For the real executive department, which consists of the Prime Minister and his cabinet, is nothing more nor less than a committee of the House of Commons, that is, of the legislature, and can be removed by the latter at pleasure. This mistake of Montesquieu, however, was of little consequence, so far as the revolutionary tendency of his writings was concerned. For his readers, who, as we have seen, were filled with admiration of the English, believed, with him, that the executive, legislative, and judiciary departments in England were independent of each other. And they knew that in France all three of these departments were centred in the Crown. They knew also that in England the laws were made, not by the arbitrary will of the King, but by a representative assembly, which, though mainly aristocratic, was very largely tempered by the public opinion of the middle class.

Many of the remarks of Montesquieu were quoted as oracular utterances by his successors. One of them was this: "Extra-judicial accusations, secret espionage, and anonymous letters are political expedients employed only by tyrants, and are as

disgraceful for him who employs them as for those who are used as tools in the transaction. They must be totally banished from a good monarchy." And in another place he says that writings obnoxious to the government should be less severely punished by the courts than actions, while thoughts should never be punished.

At a time when very few indeed of the French had ever dreamed of political freedom, Montesquieu attacked with boldness many of the abuses of the State. Among them, for instance, was the system of farming out the indirect taxes to grasping speculators. Standing armies, too, were among the objects of his attack. A very large standing army, he says, is a pretext for immoderate taxation, a means of enfeebling the State, and an instrument for enslaving the people.

De Lolme, too, in his work on the English constitution, instilled into the French a love of personal liberty by describing the safeguards which the *habeas corpus* act and similar institutions afforded the individual in England. He told his countrymen that, in England, every citizen had the right to lay his grievances before Parliament by petition, and before the people by a free press—"a right which is dreaded," he says, "by rulers, and which, by dissipating the cloud of majesty that surrounds them, brings them down to the level of other men."

CHAPTER XXXV.

ABSOLUTE DEMOCRACY PREACHED.

TO modern eyes there is nothing radical in the political desires of de Lolme and Montesquieu. Montesquieu gives a place in his ideal constitution not merely to the nobility but to the clergy as well. He merely desired reforms, and the substitution of a limited for an absolute monarchy.

Radicalism, however, is a relative term ; and even this much was radical at the time when it was written. Far more so, however, were the writings of the man who dominated political thought in the last part of the century. Montesquieu was the ideal of the men who made the constitution of 1791 ; but Jean-Jacques Rousseau was the idol of Robespierre, St. Just, and the men of 1793.

Montesquieu died in 1755, but a short time after Rousseau had begun to write his important works. The personal character and the life of Rousseau possess a deep interest, but are of small importance for our general subject. For although the circumstances of his life explain in a measure the character of his writings, they do not explain why these writings produced so powerful an effect upon the age—which is what we are chiefly concerned with. They produced this powerful effect because they were the brilliant

embodiment of the thoughts which were already lying, potentially at least, in the minds of the men of that time. We of the nineteenth century can read these works coolly and calmly, and in spite of all their brilliant rhetorical and dialectic power, and the intense earnestness which pervades them, can pick out with ease many of the absurdities and puerilities which they contain. But we live in a different age. Rousseau's contemporaries, on the contrary, ground down by tyranny, read his works with passionate eagerness. For them they possessed a magic charm which to us is hard to understand. So true it is that men's opinions are influenced more by psychological predispositions than by logical arguments.

The first work which gave Rousseau a wide-spread reputation was an essay awarded a prize by the Academy of Dijon, on the question whether the revival of science and art, subsequent to the Middle Ages, had contributed to the purification of morals. The Academy, in proposing the question, had doubtless had in view a mere learned account of the influence of the Renaissance upon modern Europe. But Rousseau, so far from being learned, despised learning and learned men; and answered the question in an unexpected manner. For he boldly declared that all intellectual education whatever is a moral evil. This paradox was, of course, not shared by the Dijon academicians; but Rousseau supported it with such eloquence and power that they gave him the prize.

From this moment Rousseau was a famous man, and the path that he was to pursue was mapped out. For this and his second prize-essay in 1753, on "The

Causes of Inequality among Men," contained the germs of the whole radical democratic system which he developed in his numerous subsequent writings. In the second essay he declares civilization to be a disease, and civilized men a degenerate race. All the customs and institutions of a developed society are in Rousseau's opinion unnatural and artificial. To abolish society, therefore, and return to what he chooses to call the "state of nature," is the one thing necessary to happiness. Inequality among men is the result of their degeneration; and this degeneration is caused by society; which, he admits, may develop the capacities and perfect the understandings of men, but makes them morally bad. This assertion he attempts to justify by saying that the existing social order had been produced by an unnatural measure of power on the one hand, and an unnatural weakness on the other.

Rousseau, we see, leaves the solid ground of reality, and deduces from the phantoms of his own brain, as premises, all manner of conclusions. "The first man," he cries, "who, after enclosing a piece of land, dared to say: *this is mine*, and found other men simple enough to believe him, was the true founder of civilization. What crimes, what wars, what murders, what misery and horror would have been spared the human race, if some one, then, had torn down the enclosure. . . . and had cried to his fellows: 'Beware of listening to this impostor; you are lost, if you ever forget that the fruits of the earth belong to all in common, and the earth itself to no one.'"

Communism, we see. The plebeian Rousseau,

living from hand to mouth, by turns valet, clerk, tramp, tutor, copyist, author, fugitive, was filled with unquenchable hatred of the rich and powerful. This hatred, together with an ardent love of humanity, made him burn with the desire to overthrow society and carry men back to that state of "nature" which he conjured up in his imagination.

"Are not all the advantages of society," he indignantly asks, "for the benefit of the powerful and the rich? Are not all lucrative employments filled by them alone? And is not public authority entirely in their favor? When one of them robs his creditors or commits other rascalities, is he not sure of impunity? Are not the clubbings that he administers, the acts of violence that he commits, the murders and assassinations of which he is guilty, mere matters that are hushed up, and after six months no longer mentioned?—But let this same man *be* robbed, and the entire police force is immediately on the alert; and woe to the innocent man whom he chances to suspect.—A rich man has to pass a dangerous place? See how many escorts he has.—The axle of his carriage breaks? Every one flies to his assistance.—There is a noise at his door? He speaks a word, and silence reigns.—The crowd incommodes him? He makes a sign, and the road is clear.—A waggoner gets in the way of his carriage? His flunkies are ready to beat the waggoner to death, and fifty honest pedestrians would be crushed under the wheels rather than that the gorgeous equipage of one puppy should be retarded. . . . How different is the picture of him who is poor!

The more humanity owes him, the more society refuses him. All doors are closed to him, even when he has the right to have them opened ; and if he sometimes obtains justice, he does so with more difficulty than another would have in obtaining pardon for a crime. If there is a *corvée* to be undertaken, or militia to be levied, he is selected to do it. In addition to his own burden, he bears that which is shifted upon him by his richer neighbor. At the least accident that befalls him, every one deserts him. Let *his* poor cart upset, and I hold him lucky if he escapes the outrages of the brisk lackeys of some young duke. In a word, all free assistance flies him in time of need, for the very reason that he has nothing with which to pay for it. But I regard him as a ruined man if he is so unfortunate as to have an honorable spirit, an attractive daughter, and a powerful neighbor.—Let us sum up briefly the relations between the rich man and the poor man : *You have need of me, for I am rich and you are poor. Let us then make a bargain. I will vouchsafe you the honor of being my servant, on condition that you give me what little you have left, to repay me for the trouble I take in lording it over you.*"

In all this we see the fierce bitterness with which Rousseau assaulted the existing order of things. Nor can it be denied that much of what he said of civilization in general was but too true of the rotten fabric of Old France.

At the first glance it might seem that Rousseau's imprecations upon intellectual education, science, and art, were diametrically opposed to that spirit

which produced the feverish thirst for knowledge which was mentioned above. And so it was in a measure. But both movements were revolutionary. For they were both products of the profound discontent and longing for some radical change which pervaded men's minds before the Revolution. Common to all the various Utopias that were dreamed of by different men, was the deep hatred of the *existing* social system. All kinds of enemies were using their various weapons in the attack on the tottering fortress of the Old Régime. Infantry, cavalry, artillery, regulars, guerillas, free lances, high-souled heroes, and stealthy assassins—each made his own species of attack, but all attacked.

The flaming words in which Rousseau, with all the fervid conviction of a genius that bordered upon madness, depicted the ideal and idyllic bliss and innocence of men in a "state of nature," freed from the curses and corruptions of civilization, had an almost demoniac fascination for men who were goaded at every turn by the privileges, the pomp, and the insolence of a nobility and priesthood that had ceased to perform their proper functions, and lived by sucking the heart's blood of the people. Nor did Rousseau spare the monarchy, in his fierce charge upon all the existing institutions. Society was due, he said, to an iniquitous compact between oppressors and oppressed, "which permitted a child to govern old men, an idiot to rule wise men, a handful of men to gorge themselves with dainties, while the famished multitude lacked the necessities of life." "The whole occupation of kings and their

ministers," he says, "has but two aims, to extend their domination without, and to make it more absolute within." When they allege other aims, they make false pretexts. "The expressions *public good, welfare of our subjects, glory of the nation*, so stupidly employed in public edicts, are ever the harbingers of disastrous measures; and the people groan in advance when their masters allude to their paternal solicitude." But there is a remedy against tyranny: the compact between the governors and the governed may be dissolved; "the despot is master only so long as he is stronger than the people, and as soon as they are able to expel him, he can make no complaint of their violence." It will always be equally absurd for a man to say to a man, or for a man to say to a people: "*I make a contract with you, according to which you bear all the expenses and I reap all the profits, a contract which I will observe only so long as I choose, but which you will observe so long as I see fit.*" If madmen sign such a treaty, their signatures are not valid. If men who are prostrate upon the ground with a sword at their throats, accept these conditions, their acceptance is null and void. The idea that men under compulsion, or madmen, could have contracted a thousand years ago for all subsequent generations, is absurd. A contract, for a minor, is not binding when he becomes an adult; and when the infant has arrived at years of discretion, he is his own master. At last we are adults, and we have only to act like rational men, in order to reduce to their true value the pre-

tensions of that authority which calls itself legitimate. It possesses power, nothing more. But "a pistol in the hands of a highwayman is also a power"; will you therefore say that I am in duty bound to give him my purse?—I yield only to force, and will recapture my purse as soon as I can seize his pistol.

Rousseau, we see, declared open war upon the government. France and Europe rang with applause. "The day will come," says Condorcet, "when the sun will shine upon none but freemen who acknowledge no master save their reason; when tyrants and slaves, priests and their stupid or hypocritical tools will no longer exist, except in history and upon the stage; when men will no longer speak of them except to pity their victims and their dupes, to maintain a useful vigilance by recalling the horror of their excesses, and to be able to recognize and to crush beneath the weight of Reason the first germs of superstition and of tyranny, if they should ever reappear." A strange Utopia! The dream of a philanthropist who was destined to take poison in prison to escape the clutches of men more radical than himself, the demons of the guillotine! This is, indeed, one of the most tragic aspects of the Revolution—the aspect which gives it so awful a fascination, so terrible a sublimity. We need shed few tears over the fate of those insolent nobles, who thought no more of driving over a peasant than of killing a mouse, nor of those libertine bishops, whose episcopal palaces were little else than aristocratic brothels. But we may well mourn the fate of those great-hearted men who, imbued with a world-wide philan-

thropy, burned with a desire to usher in a millennium of bliss for oppressed humanity, but awoke from their optimistic dreams to the bitter reality that the populace were not the idyllic and amiable beings that Rousseau had painted them, not innocent lambs, but ferocious wild beasts, too ignorant to distinguish friend from foe.

The men of whom Rousseau speaks in his famous book on the *Social Compact* are not concrete, tangible individuals, but pure abstractions, mathematical units of equal magnitude. All men, according to him, are *by nature* innocent, affectionate, grateful, good. Scratch off the foul scales of civilization, and every man is at heart one of these ideal beings. He is still more. He is also an entirely rational being—capable of assenting to a clear abstract principle, and of moving in the straight line of logical syllogism from the premises to the ultimate conclusions. In the dramas, dialogues, and other writings of the time, we see gardeners, jugglers, peasants, country parsons, philosophers, tattooed barbarians and naked savages, all discoursing, reasoning, marching in the rectilinear path of syllogistic deduction from abstract ideas. Rational, good, perfectly equal and perfectly free—such are the abstract entities which Rousseau calls men, and who, he says, came together at some unknown epoch to make a social compact. Their aim in making this compact was “to discover a form of association which defends and protects with the whole power of the community the person and the property of each associate, and by which each man, though uniting himself with all, obeys in reality only

himself, and remains as free as before." This united assembly of abstract individuals is called simply the State when it obeys its own will or remains passive; the Sovereign, when it acts upon itself; a Power, when compared with other similar assemblages. In the same way the individuals united in a State are called, when regarded collectively, the People; regarded as participants in the sovereign power, they are called Citizens; regarded as under the necessity of obeying their own laws, that is, the laws of the State, they are called Subjects. All this abstract juggling with words is employed by Rousseau in the specious but vain attempt to reconcile the absolute freedom of the individual with his absolute obedience to the will of the majority. Sovereignty, he says, is inalienable and indivisible. The general will—*la volonté générale*—can never err. All error arises from party spirit; wherefore societies and corporations within the State should be either prohibited or so multiplied that no single one can have an appreciable influence. "The sovereign, consisting merely of the sum of the individuals who compose it, has and can have no interest opposed to theirs; and consequently the sovereign power has no need of guaranteeing the subjects [against tyranny], because it is impossible that a body should desire to injure all its members."

We see, everything abstract. In the real world we live in, we see concrete individual men, women, and children, with different desires, different passions, different intellectual capacities, and different moral characteristics. Not so in the phantom world

which issued from the seething brain of Rousseau. All his men of the social compact are equal, all free, all good, all eager to obey cheerfully the *volonté générale*. The people, not the King, are the sovereign. The King is but the people's clerk—nay, less than their clerk—their lackey. The compact between them is not of indefinite duration, and not one “which can be annulled only by mutual consent, or by bad faith on the part of one of the contracting parties.” By no means. For, “it is contrary,” says Rousseau, “to the nature of the body politic for the sovereign to impose a law upon itself which it can never infringe.” No sacred and inviolable constitution to bind the people forever! “The right to change the constitution is the prime guarantee of all other rights.” “There is, there can be, no fundamental law obligatory [for all time] upon the whole people, not even the social compact.” For a prince, or an assembly, or magistrates to call themselves the representatives of the people is usurpation and falsehood. “Sovereignty cannot be represented for the same reason that it is inalienable. . . . The moment a people elects representatives, it is no longer free, it no longer exists. . . . The English imagine themselves free, but they are vastly mistaken; they are free only during the election of members of Parliament; so soon as the election has taken place, they are slaves, they are nothing. . . . The deputies of a people, then, neither are nor can be its representatives; they are only its commissioners, and can make no final conclusions. Every law that has not been ratified by the people directly is null and void;

it is not a law." "It is not sufficient that the assembled people should have fixed the constitution of the State once by giving its sanction to a body of laws; they must hold, in addition, fixed and periodical assemblies which nothing can abolish or prorogue, so that on fixed days the people may legally assemble without the necessity of any formal convocation. . . . At the moment when the people has thus assembled, all jurisdiction of the government ceases, the executive power is suspended." Society begins afresh, and the citizens, restored to their primitive independence, renew, for such period as they choose, the provisional compact which they had concluded only for a term of years. "The opening of these assemblies, the object of which is the maintenance of the social compact, should always take place with the decision of two questions which are never to be suppressed, and which are separately put to the vote. The first question is this: Is it the pleasure of the sovereign people to maintain the present form of government? And the second: Do the sovereign people wish to leave the administration in the hands of the present incumbents?" In submitting, therefore, to chiefs, the sovereign people merely delegates to them "a function, in which, as simple agents, they exercise in the name of the sovereign people the power of which they are depositaries, but which can be modified, limited, or reassumed by the sovereign at will." Thus the people possess not merely "the legislative power, which belongs to them, and can only belong to them," but they delegate and take back again at will the executive function as well.

Those who exercise this function are the people's employees. "The people can set them up or pull them down when they please." "It is not for them to bargain with the people, but to obey." When they presume to make other pretensions, they are usurpers; and, in this case, insurrection is not merely the most sacred of rights, but the first of duties.

These doctrines, when put to the practical test in the Revolution, led fanatics, like Robespierre and St. Just, to regard themselves and their group of followers as the sovereign people. They led to organized anarchy. "The Republic is lost!" cried Robespierre, when seized by the opposite party. "The Republic is lost! The assassins have triumphed!"

But, on the other hand, there are passages in Rousseau's "*Contrat Social*," which, if acted upon, would lead to a despotism more absolute than the world has ever seen. For, all "the clauses of the social compact," says Rousseau, "may be reduced to a single one, namely, the total surrender of every individual with all his rights to the community." Every man yields himself up entire, "just as he is, himself, with all his strength and all his property."

Such are some of the fundamental ideas of the "*Contrat Social*"—quoted daily and hourly by the radical democrats of the Reign of Terror. Before its appearance Rousseau had published in 1759 his romance "*La Nouvelle Héloïse*," and three years later his "*Émile*"; both of which developed still further the thought contained in the two prize essays. In the first he paints in the blackest colors the distorted

and artificial conditions of the existing civilization, and compares it with the alluring charms of a life of idyllic simplicity and communion with nature. In the second he attacks the stiff and unnatural methods of education and the treatment of children, and preaches the substitution of parental love, and life in the midst of nature, in place of the barbarous application of the rod and the excessive use of books.

It was, of course, an absurd exaggeration in Napoleon to say that but for Rousseau the Revolution would not have taken place; for Rousseau, like every other individual, was a product of his time, and his writings a result of that revolutionary movement which they merely hastened and strengthened. Still, their influence, in this way, was prodigious. A letter written by Grimm, in 1754, says that the Dijon prize-essay produced a species of revolution at Paris. "It is impossible to express or imagine," says Hume in writing from Paris in 1765, "the enthusiasm of this nation in his favor; . . . no person ever so much engaged their attention as Rousseau. Voltaire and everybody else are quite eclipsed by him." The circulation of his books was enormous. When *La Nouvelle Héloïse* appeared, the booksellers were unable to meet the demand, but lent copies of it at so much a day or so much an hour. At first, as much as twelve *sous* an hour was paid per volume for the privilege of reading it. Painted with all the glowing hues of a fervid imagination, and flaming with the fire of deep conviction, the romances of Rousseau produced upon all sentimental natures, and especially upon women, an indescribable effect.

To him, more than to any other individual, it was due that the joys of domestic life were revealed anew to the upper classes in France, and that aristocratic mothers resumed that most beautiful of all maternal duties, the suckling of their own children. The brilliant *salons* no longer exercised such undisputed sway, but the pleasures of country life came into vogue, and even some of the upper nobles began to spend a part of the year upon their country estates. Return to nature and simplicity became the watchword. The style of architecture became simpler, and the old style of landscape gardening, with its long rectilinear avenues of artificially trimmed box-bushes and trees, gave place to the more natural English style with irregular groups of trees growing with their natural ruggedness and strength. Thus the whole aspect of society became tinged with the ideas of Rousseau. For Rousseau gave utterance, with amazing eloquence, to the thoughts that were suited to the radical spirit of the age.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

APPROACH OF THE CRISIS.

THAT spirit advanced with accelerating force. At the time when the physiocratic movement began in the middle of the century, advanced political thinkers desired, indeed, reform, but scarcely thought of carrying out these reforms by a representative popular assembly. Montesquieu stood well-nigh alone, at that time, in advocating the idea that the executive, legislative, and judiciary departments should be independent political forces, balanced against each other and holding each other in check. Quesnay pronounced this balance theory a fatal idea. He and nearly all the Physiocrats desired to carry out their economic theories, not through and by the people, but for the people, through and by the absolute power of the Crown. This absolutism they wished to be an enlightened one, acting according to their economic views. They wished to induce the King to sweep away by his arbitrary power the remnants of the mediæval impediments to the economic development of the country. And, indeed, if thorough reforms had been instituted by the Crown at the middle of the century, the radical force of the Revolution might have been broken. But

twenty years later the time for mere reforms had gone by, and the days of absolute monarchy were numbered. For thinking men, whether belonging to the school of Montesquieu, or to that of Rousseau, were no longer content with the thought of obtaining the material advantages of liberty, but longed for liberty itself. The provinces began to show signs of a desire for local self-government. The memory of the States-General, which had never convened since 1614, began to revive. Men began to applaud resistance to the despotic decrees of the Crown; and when the parliaments were abolished in 1771, the same public which had so often suffered from their prejudices was profoundly moved by their fall. It seemed as though the last barrier to the arbitrary royal power had fallen. Voltaire was astonished at this opposition, and indignant at the sympathy of the public with the so often narrow-minded parliaments. For he belonged to the previous generation; and having been long absent from Paris, was unaware of the full extent of the change that had taken place in public opinion. The French were now no longer content to have their affairs better conducted; they wished to conduct them themselves; and it became more and more evident that the Revolution was to take place, not merely with the consent of the people, but by their own hands. "I think," says de Tocqueville [chap. xv.] "that from this moment that radical revolution which was destined to confound in one common ruin what was good and bad in the Old Régime, was inevitable. A people so badly schooled in [political] self-action

could not undertake to reform everything at once without also destroying everything." There were already some who foresaw the coming shock. "Long before the Revolution," says von Sybel,* "Mirabeau saw clearly the necessity for its outbreak and the direction it would take." "Twenty years before the Revolution," says Madame Campan,† "I frequently heard it said that the same imposing aspect of power no longer existed in the palace of Versailles as under Louis XIV. ; that the institutions of the old monarchy were falling rapidly into decay ; that the people, crushed by taxation, were silently miserable ; but that they were commencing to lend ear to the bold doctrines of the philosophers who proclaimed aloud their sufferings and their rights ; and lastly, that the century would not come to an end without France's being shaken by some great shock, and the course of her destinies changed." . . . "One day," she continues, "I heard my father compare the French monarchy to a beautiful antique statue. He admitted that the pedestal which sustained it was crumbling to pieces ; that the form of the statue was becoming hidden beneath parasitic plants that were gradually covering it up ; but he asked, with a feeling of painful apprehension, what artist would be able to reconstruct the pedestal without overthrowing the statue ?"—The sympathy felt by the people for the parliaments when they were abolished in 1771 has been already

* Von Sybel, "*Geschichte der Revolutionszeit*," vol. i. pages 84-5.

† Campan, pp. 7-8.

mentioned. Louis XVI. recalled them, and Mme. Campan* informs us that this event threw Paris into an intoxication of joy.

Things grew ever more radical. The material wealth of the country was greater under Louis XVI. than ever before; but, as we shall presently see, this very increasing prosperity hastened the Revolution. Forty years† before the Revolution, the increase in material wealth had begun. The government began to be interested in the prosperity of the people; and the laws, though remaining severe, were less strictly enforced. Population increased and wealth accumulated at such a rate that Arthur Young in 1788 declared that Bordeaux had a more important trade than Liverpool, and that the progress of French maritime commerce had been latterly greater even than in England—having doubled in twenty years. All this took place in spite of the governmental restrictions to industry. But the greater the increase in prosperity, the greater the discontent and hatred of the old institutions. For prosperity contributed to enlighten men, and to make them more keenly alive to the evils of despotism. “It is not always in going from bad to worse,” says de Tocqueville, “that there is danger of revolution. Experience teaches that the most dangerous moment for a bad government is usually that in which it begins to be better. . . . Feudalism at the height of its power had not inspired the French with as much hatred as upon the eve of its destruction.

* Campan, p. 82.

† De Tocqueville, chap. xvi.

The most insignificant of the arbitrary acts of Louis XVI. seemed harder to endure than all the despotism of Louis XIV. The brief imprisonment of Beaumarchais produced a greater emotion in Paris than the Dragoonades [against the Huguenots] had done." "No one pretended in 1780 that France was in a state of decay; but on the contrary that her progress was without bounds. Then it was, indeed, that the theory of the continuous and indefinite perfectibility of man arose." During the first half of the century there was little hope of the future; but now there was no fear. "The imagination, seizing in advance upon an approaching and unheard-of felicity, made men insensible to their present [share of] prosperity" and eager for still more.

But apart from these general psychological reasons for discontent with the present and longing for change, there were also more special and not less powerful reasons. The finances of the government, owing to its arbitrary nature, were in a deplorable situation. In spite of the grinding taxation, expenses increased more rapidly than receipts. Secret loans were made without guarantee, and the creditors of the King—that is, of the government—were never sure of getting their interest. The government had become the greatest consumer of industrial products, and the chief employer of labor in the country. Hence the number of those interested pecuniarily in the government had increased prodigiously; and therefore the vicious administration of the finances, which for a long time had been merely a public evil, became a private calamity for thousands of families.

In 1789 the State owed millions to such creditors, who, being often debtors themselves, and relying on being paid promptly by the government, were brought into great pecuniary difficulties by the mismanagement of the public money. And while the number of such malcontents had been increasing, they were also becoming more irritated. For the spirit of speculation, and the desire for wealth and comfort, which were spreading and growing with the increase of industry, made these grievances intolerable to the very men who, thirty years before, would have endured them without complaining. Thus it was that the holders of government bonds, the merchants, manufacturers, and other business men and capitalists who usually belong to the class most hostile to political innovations, and are most favorably disposed to whatever form of government happens to be existing, were now impatient and determined upon a change. They clamored especially for a complete revolution in the financial system, without reflecting that, in disturbing this part of the government, they would overthrow all the rest.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

ENOUGH has probably been said to demonstrate that the Revolution was not an accident, but the act that formed the inevitable conclusion of a gigantic intellectual change which had taken place since the death of Louis XIV. At that time France was in a state of almost fatal exhaustion. Her armies were vanquished, her treasury empty, her people groaning beneath a frightful load of taxation, her literature, her art, and her science sunk into insignificance. While the nobles and the upper clergy rolled in wealth and luxury, the peasants were starving, and thousands became beggars, smugglers, robbers, and desperadoes. Everywhere there was hatred between the classes. The *bourgeoisie* hated the nobility, while the peasantry hated *bourgeoisie* and nobility alike. The lesser nobles hated the dukes and marquises and counts; and the petty *bourgeois* hated the rich notables. The laity hated the clergy, and the poor parsons hated the luxurious archbishops and bishops.

But not all was lost. For, after the death of Louis XIV., there came a violent reaction against the protective spirit; and the thinkers of France, eagerly turning their eyes toward a country which

they had formerly despised, drew from English literature the weapons which they then sharpened and turned against their enemies. But their attacks upon that Church which had instigated the revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the persecution of the Huguenots, were met by the government in a spirit of ruthless intolerance which rendered them all the more radical. For the measures of the government were not such as to crush the anti-clerical writers, but merely to exasperate them to desperation. Their efforts were successful; and when the foundations of priestly power had been sapped in the first half of the century, the writers of the subsequent generation turned their attention to physical science and a corresponding radical philosophy, and to the abuses of the State. They, too, succeeded in destroying the old ideas; so that, at last, the bonds which had held the old French society together were burst asunder, and the French nation was dissolved into its elements. The cement had been taken from between the bricks of the social edifice; so that the least puff of wind sufficed to lay it in ruins. French society, to change the metaphor, was a mass of inflammable materials with innumerable sparks flying about it in every direction. The American War for Independence was such a spark, which, falling into the midst of the combustible heap, "ignited a flame," says Buckle, "which never ceased its ravages until it had destroyed all that Frenchmen once held dear, and had left for the instruction of mankind an awful lesson of the crimes into which continued oppression may hurry a generous and long-suffering

people." "On the other side of the Atlantic," says the same great Englishman, "a great people, provoked by the intolerable injustice of the English government, rose in arms, turned on their oppressors, and, after a desperate struggle, gloriously obtained their independence. In 1776," he continues, "the Americans laid before Europe that noble Declaration, which ought to be hung up in the nursery of every king, and blazoned on the porch of every royal palace. In words, the memory of which can never die, they declared, that the object of the institution of government is to secure the rights of the people ; that from the people alone it derives its powers ; and 'that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundations on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.'"

A generation earlier, the Declaration of Independence would have been received by the French with scorn and derision. But, coming when it did, it created such a storm of enthusiasm, that public opinion forced the government, against its will, to sign a treaty of alliance with the young American republic. The democratic spirit had even penetrated to many of the nobles ; and all know how gallantly Lafayette and his courageous band of volunteers, and afterwards the French regulars on land and sea, aided the most illustrious of Americans in his fight for freedom. The American War for Independence added fresh fuel to the democratic flame in France,

and hastened the catastrophe in that country. In speaking of the epoch of reforms in the eighteenth century, the careful German historian Ranke pronounces the secession of the American colonies from the mother country to be unquestionably the most important event in that epoch. The establishment of a vigorous republic, he says, even beyond the Atlantic, could not but react powerfully upon the intellectual fermentation of Europe. Not only did the example of a successful rebellion encourage immensely the revolutionary party in France; but the French who fought with George Washington were also directly stimulated by contact with their new allies, and carried back with them to France those democratic principles and that contempt for distinctions of birth which they had imbibed in the New World. In the Declaration of Independence Thomas Jefferson had said that all men were born free and equal, and that life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness were among the inalienable rights of man. And this doctrine of the Rights of Man was adopted, at the suggestion of Lafayette, by the French National Assembly. There is also reason to believe that Thomas Jefferson, who was much consulted by the democratic party in Paris, gave the advice which determined the *tiers état*, or third estate, to call itself the National Assembly, and thus to bring about the struggle that overthrew the nobility and clergy.

America, to the French of that stormy time, was a sort of ideal land, a species of paradise where the dreams of Rousseau about the social compact were

supposed to be actual facts. What they themselves had been thinking and writing was now suddenly carried out, apparently at least, in the far-off wonderland of the West. It is well known how enthusiastic was the reception accorded to Benjamin Franklin by the French. His simple dress contrasted strangely with the gorgeous costumes and powdered wigs at the Court of Versailles. "This novelty," says Mme. Campan, "charmed the vivacious French women. Elegant entertainments were given to Doctor Franklin. . . . I was present at one of them, at which the most beautiful among three hundred women was appointed to place upon the gray head of the American philosopher a crown of laurel, and two kisses upon the old man's cheeks. Even in the palace of Versailles, at the exposition of Sèvres porcelain, a medallion of Franklin was sold before the very eyes of the King, having upon it the inscription: *Eripuit cælo fulmen, sceptrumque tyrannis.*"* "He snatched the lightning from Heaven, and the sceptre from tyrants." There was no social circle in which the aid rendered by the government to the cause of American independence was not applauded with transports. And while liberty, equality and the rights of man were the subjects of deliberation by the Condorcets, the Baillys, and the Mirabeaus, the minister Ségur issued the previously mentioned royal edict, which declared ineligible to the rank of captain every officer whose family had not been noble for four generations, and shut out from all

* Campan, pp. 235-6.

military rank plebeians who were not sons of chevaliers de Saint-Louis. Another decision of the court which did violence to the new democratic spirit was that in future all ecclesiastical property, from the most modest priory to the richest abbey, should be the appanages of the nobility. Marie Antoinette instinctively perceived the danger* for the Crown in the American secession from England, and bitterly opposed the alliance with the colonies. She thought it the greatest folly to assist rebels in attacking the royal prerogative and establishing a republican government, and often made sarcastic remarks on the enthusiasm shown for Franklin. Public opinion, however, as mentioned before, was too powerful to be resisted by the royal party. When Franklin died, after the outbreak of the Revolution, the National Assembly decreed unanimously, upon Mirabeau's motion, a public mourning of three days. Mirabeau was one of those nobles, whose class prejudices had yielded to the democratic spirit of the age. And, indeed, the nobles in their election platform had spoken as boldly for liberty and limitation of the royal power as the Third Estate. They played with the fire. For, knowing but little of the lowest classes of the people, they were unaware that the chief rage of the *Sans-culottes* would be directed, not against the Crown, but against themselves. The enthusiasm for America found vent in poetry as well as in prose. The Chevalier de Parry, for example, who was himself a courtier, wrote an epistle to the Bostonians in which occurs this stanza :

* Campan, ii., p. 30.

" Et vous
Peuple heureux sans rois et sans reines,
Vous dansez donc au bruit des chaînes
Qui pèsent sur le genre humain ! " *

[" And you, happy people, without kings and without queens ! You dance to the music of the clanking chains which shackle the race of man. "]

The Old Régime was tottering to its fall. Time had been when such monstrous acts of tyranny as the handing over, by the government, of Favart's wife to the embraces of the libertine Maurice de Saxe had excited scarcely a murmur on the part of the public. But things had vastly changed since then ; and when the King merely refused, at first, to allow Beaumarchais' " *Mariage de Figaro* " to appear on the stage, we are told that the words *oppression* and *tyranny* were never pronounced, in the period which preceded the fall of the throne, with more vehemence and passion. No matter where we look in that time, we see signs of the approaching political avalanche. Even in the costumes of the upper classes could be seen the growing contempt for petty distinctions of birth and the growing fondness for democratic equality. During the reign of Louis XIV. and the first half of the reign of Louis XV. " not only men of frivolous tastes, but even those distinguished for their knowledge, displayed in their attire a dainty precision, a nice and studied adjustment, a pomp of gold, of silver, and of ruffles, such as in our days can nowhere be seen except in the

* Campan, vol. iii., p. 17.

courts" of princes. In the seventeenth century the rank of a person might be immediately known by his costume, no one having the presumption to wear clothes like those of men of a higher rank than his own. But during that democratic movement which produced the French Revolution men's minds became too earnest and too intent upon more important things to care for the distinctions observed by their ancestors. Of this there is ample evidence. Soulavie, in his work on the reign of Louis XVI., observes that "the nobility, just before the Revolution, wore only simple and inexpensive clothing," and that "a duchess was no longer distinguishable from an actress." Montjoie, in his History of Marie Antoinette, says that the nobles* had long since abandoned plumes, bows of ribbon and lace on their hats, and turned them over to their lackeys. They ceased to wear embroidery on their coats, and walked the streets clad in coarse cloth, with knotty sticks in their hands and heavy shoes on their feet. Ségur, who was displeased at these changes, says of their advocates: "They failed to see that frock-coats in place of the ample and imposing costumes of the old Court presaged a general proneness to social equality." In a letter of May, 1786, Grimm tells us that it was then rare to meet people in society who could be called dressed up. The women, he says, wore ordinary wrappers and hats, and the men frock-coats and vests. And in 1787 Thomas Jefferson wrote from Paris as follows: "In society, the *habit habillé* is almost ban-

* Campan, pp. 371-2.

ished, and they begin to go even to great suppers in frock: the Court and diplomatic corps, however, must always be excepted. They are too high to be reached by any improvement. They are the last refuge from which etiquette, formality, and folly will be driven. Take away these, and they would be on a level with other people." In 1784 the Baroness d'Oberkirch remarked that "gentlemen about this time began to go about unarmed, and wore swords only in full dress. . . . And thus the French nobility laid aside a usage which the example of their fathers had consecrated through centuries." The Prince de Montbarey actually tells us that shortly before the Revolution persons of the highest rank who possessed badges, medals, and other marks of the royal favor were accustomed to conceal these under their simple frock-coats and to walk on foot in the street—which, by the way, were then without sidewalks—and mingle with the crowd.

All these are striking proofs of the tendency to amalgamate the different orders of society; and another sign of the tendency was the institution of clubs about the year 1782. At first they were social in character, but quickly assumed a democratic tendency to equality. One consequence of this was to separate the two sexes to a certain extent, and to diminish the prodigious influence of women in the gay *salons*. Women now became more womanly, and men more manly. Manners became somewhat less polished, but also less frivolous, and more vigorous. The clubs encouraged a republican roughness, and merged together the different classes. About 1784

they became political; and "from this moment," says Buckle, "all was over; and although the government, in 1787, issued orders to close the leading club, in which all classes discussed political questions, it was found impossible to stem the torrent. The order, therefore, was rescinded; the club re-assembled, and no further attempt was made to interrupt that course of affairs which a long train of preceding events had rendered inevitable."

Men felt that they were on the eve of some great upheaval. On October 13, 1787, Arthur Young mentions in his diary that he dined with a large company in Paris, and that the conversation turned mainly upon the political situation. Some of the guests thought, he says, that the finances were in so hopeless a condition that nothing could set them to rights except the convocation of the States-General, and that the States-General could not possibly meet without causing a revolution in the government. All were agreed that something extraordinary would happen. Four days later Young was at another similar entertainment, and records that in the unanimous opinion of the company the country was on the eve of some great revolution in the government. "It is remarkable," he says, "that a similar conversation never takes place without mention of the possible bankruptcy of the State. The usual question is: 'Would such a bankruptcy cause a civil war and the total overthrow of the government?' . . . Everybody agrees that it is impossible for the States-General to meet without more liberty resulting for the people." On the 14th of July, 1789, Arthur

Young was in Metz. This, as is known, was the very day when the Bastille was stormed; but of course the news was not yet known in Metz. Young says that he conversed with a person of great intelligence, who said pathetically: "We can now hope to establish a freer constitution only by shedding torrents of blood—and yet that blood must be shed. For the old government is full of insupportable abuses. . . . As for foreign war, God knows what will be the result of it; and even if we are victorious, our very success may prove fatal to us. France, too, as well as England, may have a Cromwell in her bosom." Her Cromwell was Napoleon Bonaparte. But one of the most striking proofs that the Revolution was inevitable was the contents of the *cahiers* drawn up by the three orders at the election to the States-General. De Tocqueville, who studied them carefully, has written a remarkable passage * concerning them. It is this: "I read attentively the *cahiers* drawn up by the three Orders before their union in 1789; I say the Three Orders, those of the nobility and clergy as well as of the Third Estate. I see that here the change of a law is demanded, and there of a custom—and I make a note of them. I continue thus to the end of this immense task, and, when I come to put side by side all these particular demands, I see, with a sort of terror, that what is called for is the simultaneous and systematic abolition of all the laws and of all the customs existing in the country; whereupon I instantly perceive the

* De Tocqueville, p. 219-220.

approach of one of the vastest and most dangerous revolutions that have taken place in the world."

It is not my intention to follow the vain attempts of the King to avoid summoning the States-General, and to ward off the storm by discharging one ministry and setting up another. These are insignificant matters, except as illustrations of the impotence of the old royal machinery to grind the new democratic grain. But enough illustrations of this have, I hope, been given. My task has been to paint a picture of the Old Régime, and to trace the steps of the intellectual movement which overthrew it, and began a new epoch in history. That task has been performed, very far from completely, no doubt, but as well as limited space and knowledge have allowed. I have discussed the intellectual changes before 1789. But with that year the scene will change. In the words of Louis Blanc, "ideas will now become acts, books will be transformed into combats, and philosophers into gladiators."

THE END.

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